

Class PZ 3

Book C 77347

G
PRESENTED BY

GREY FISH

BY

W. VICTOR COOK

Author of

"Anton of the Alps," "A Wilderness Wooing," &c.

"Health to Man, and Death to the Grey Fish! "

—*Shetland New Year Toast*

NEW YORK

FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY

PUBLISHERS

PZ 3
C 77347
G

Gift

Publisher

MAR 16 1921

M.V.G. no. 26-21.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
THE COAST PATROL	1
THE AGENCY AT SOLLER	26
THE SECRET OF THE SIERRA	48
GREY FISH	68
THE SHARK'S CAGE	93
THE ISLE OF LADIES	117
CATCHING A TARTAR	142
CAPTAIN CARLOTTA	158
THE HOUSE OF THE SPY	179
THE GOLDEN SNUFF-BOX	199
THE BULB-GARDEN	225
BLACKLISTED	259

GREY FISH.

THE COAST PATROL.

I.

THE first time that Donald Bruce made contact with the Little Bird the encounter was purely accidental, although (in view of certain purposes of his own) the Scot had been looking for the man for some weeks, in a desultory sort of way, up and down the ports of Spain. What the Little Bird might be like he had no idea. He had, however, a sufficient appreciation of the peculiar flavour of Spanish humour to guess that El Pajarillo, smuggler, fisherman, and possibly secret agent, had very little in common with his nickname—except, it might be, a special gift for making himself scarce when the moment was appropriate.

Bruce was down on the quayside near the Custom-House at Barcelona, watching the stevedores at work on a ship which lay moored alongside. He was pretty often on the quayside at this and other ports of the Peninsula,

where the well-known London wine firm of M'Ilroy, M'Ilroy, & M'Allister had business. As a young man of twenty-seven, Bruce had lately had to stand a good deal of 'chipping' because he was neither in khaki nor in blue, serving his country 'Somewhere' in Europe, Asia, or Africa, or on the Seven Seas, but continued to enjoy the privileges of residence in a neutral country and 'business as usual.' Bruce, however, was not at all the sort of young man to be moved from his course by 'chipping.' He went on frequenting the ports of Spain under the auspices of M'Ilroy, M'Ilroy, & M'Allister; and if he never seemed particularly busy, and if he spent a good deal of his time in gossip, it is a fact that the canny old surviving principal of the famous firm never had a word of complaint to utter against the confidential clerk.

It was blazing hot on the quay. Several stevedores had come up from the ship's hold for a breather, and one of them, a great, gaunt, grave-faced fellow, with black hair just tinged with grey, swung himself up from the deck on to the quay, and seizing a skin bottle such as the Basque mountaineers use, held it high above his head and poured a steady stream of wine down his throat, without touching the bottle with his lips, and without

spilling a drop. Then he turned and offered the bottle to another man standing beside him in the group of spectators about the big crane which was loading the ship.

This other made a wry face. '*Gracias*, little cousin, but I drink a better wine nowadays. And I smoke *puros* of the best. None of your cheap cigarettes for me! And you could be doing the same, if you had taken my advice.'

'Bah!' said the big man contemptuously. 'Blood-money! The bubbles in your wine are drowned men's breath.' He set down his wine-skin, lighted a rice-paper cigarette, and turned away.

Bruce, who understood the Catalan tongue as well as he understood most of the dialects of Spain, stood considering this rather unusual remark as he idly watched the scene around him. It was a scene full of colour for the artist's brush, full of 'copy' for the romancer's pen, full of promise for the merchants of the great and flourishing port, full of pride for Spain. Men of every nation whose shores the blue Mediterranean washes were working on the ships which lay there—Greeks and Maltese, Italians and hardy men of southern France, and red-fezzed, swarthy Moors from the African coast.

Suddenly Bruce noted that the man who worked the crane engine had by just a second failed to stop its circling arm in time. The huge steel chain with its massive hook swung round like a stroke of fate upon the gaunt stevedore, whose face was turned away. The young Scot leaped forward, and violently pushed the big man aside.

The stevedore fell on the ground, but was up again in a moment, and a long knife flashed in the sun.

‘Your pardon,’ said the Scot quietly; ‘but your life was in danger.’ He ducked his own head as he spoke, to avoid the back-swing of the chain, but in those few seconds it had been wound up into safety.

The Spaniard stood and stared. The suddenness of the thing left him for a moment speechless. Then, with a splendid gesture, he doffed his red Catalan bonnet and held out his hand. ‘Señor,’ he said, ‘you are a brave man, indeed, and you have a debt against Pablo el Pajarillo which he can never repay.’

Bruce grasped the nervy brown hand. ‘Never is a long day,’ said he. ‘Will you smoke a *puro* with me?’ He held out his cigar-case.

The gift of a *puro* is one of the roads to

the heart of a Spanish peasant, and in a few minutes the two men were strolling down the quay together.

‘What is your name, señor my preserver?’ asked the Little Bird.

Bruce told him. ‘You may possibly know me by sight. I am in the employ of M’Ilroy, M’Ilroy, & M’Allister, the wine exporters.’

‘*Cierto!* I have seen you before.’

They left the quay, and quietly strolled along smoking under the palm-trees of the Paseo de Colón towards the great monument where the stone Columbus points over the sea.

‘These are evil times, Pajarillo,’ said Bruce sententiously.

With a melancholy nod the Little Bird agreed. ‘You may well say so, señor. One would say the good God was asleep. This war is terrible.’

‘And yet, to some of your countrymen it brings a golden harvest,’ said the Scot.

‘*Cierto!* When the big dogs fight, the little dogs get the bones.’ He held up his *puro* between his finger and thumb and looked at it affectionately, but his manner was strictly non-committal.

Bruce gazed reflectively across the sunlit waters. ‘Strange things are happening on that blue sea,’ said he.

‘Very strange things, señor.’

‘And under it, too.’

‘Under it also, señor,’ the Catalan gravely agreed.

‘Many good ships have been sunk,’ said Bruce, blowing out a cloud of blue smoke. ‘There was a French ship sunk yesterday only a few leagues from where we are sitting.’

The Little Bird made no comment on this.

‘Those who sink the ships,’ continued the Britisher, ‘require assistance from the mainland. There are difficulties in this, but it has always been the case that demand creates supply. For careful, trusty assistance, liberal payment is given. Very liberal payment, my friend.’

The Catalan sat without speaking on the stone bench they had found, and watched the faint spiral that curled up into the sunlight from the ash at the end of his *puro*. The harshness of his keen, hawk-like face was softened by the lines of his mouth. The face might have said pirate or brigand; but the mouth, and something in the piercing black eyes under their shaggy brows, said poet. For just an instant his eyes quivered as he gave a swift side-glance at his companion. But the Scot was not looking at him.

‘I have heard of men,’ said Bruce, ‘who

but recently were as poor as muleteers. Now they are quite rich. They made their money by being careful and clever. But for such men, I dare say the French ship would still be on her voyage.'

'Bah!'

There was a violence of disgust in the exclamation as the Spaniard rose suddenly to his feet, flinging from him as he did so the half-smoked cigar.

The Scot smiled pleasantly and took out his cigar-case again. 'Try another. You will find several brands there.'

'Señor,' said the older man, his lined brown face working curiously, 'I do not understand you. It is true that you have done me a good turn—you have saved me perhaps a few years of life. Also, it is true that I am a poor man. Perhaps some one has told you that I am a *contrabandista*. Nevertheless, I have my principles. And I do not take money to assist in cowardly murders. No, *por Dios*, I do not! And I say again, señor, I do not understand you.'

Bruce answered, 'I wish you to understand me. That is why I ask you to sit down again, while I make my meaning clearer. The remarks you have just made, Pajarillo mio, confirm the impression I had already

formed that you do not approve of these submarine atrocities.'

'*Maria purísima!* But I do not.'

'I am very glad to hear you say so,' said the Scot. 'I was going on to say that although the rewards are large which may be earned by those who help these murderers, a respectable sum may also be made by honest people who help to hinder them. British gold is as good as German gold, *mi Pajarillo*, with the advantage of being cleaner. I hope that is a better cigar.'

'An excellent *puro*, señor. As good, in its way, as English gold.' A faint suspicion of a smile showed on the grave brown face.

The Britisher nodded. 'I happen, Pablo, to know a good deal about the terms which persons who may be trusted are prepared to offer for this class of business. I am wondering whether it would interest you to hear what they are.'

'Señor Bruce, I feel sure it would,' answered the Catalan.

'In strict confidence, you understand?'

'Señor, the name of El Pajarillo is known along the coast. This is a Little Bird which does not twitter.'

'Good! For every submarine that is tracked down, and for every secret consignment of

stores for a German or Austrian submarine that is definitely prevented from reaching its destination, the persons in question are prepared to pay the sum of forty-five hundred pesetas in Spanish notes—or, if preferred, in British gold. What are your views on that?’

The Little Bird considered his cigar-end very gravely. ‘Since you do me the honour to ask my opinion, Señor Bruce, I should say it would be more satisfactory to make it level money. What is five thousand pesetas to the Government of Great Britain?’

‘A drop in the bucket, truly. But it is important to remember that here is no question of the British Government. The British Government knows nothing about it. Government patronage, Pablo, is apt to prove a grave handicap to practical utility.’

The Little Bird nodded. ‘I can well believe you, señor, though I have never myself enjoyed the opportunity to judge. Then you are not an officer?’

‘Upon my word of honour, no. And the money I bargain with is private money, every peseta.’

The Little Bird was silent. His *puro* was capital, and there was a flavour about the whole business which appealed to him. He had taken rather a fancy to this young man

who had saved his life, but the Catalans cannot help being the keenest business men in Spain. So he said, 'Level money is best, señor. It is best for both sides to be satisfied.'

Donald Bruce waved a hand in a manner indicative of long residence in the South. 'We will not haggle like a pair of market-women,' said he. 'Level money it shall be, Pajarillo, for every vessel destroyed, and every consignment stopped, without publicity, or trouble of any sort with the authorities of your country. And fighting should only be in self-defence. If there is publicity, or if the Spanish Customs get to know of the business, the price drops a thousand pesetas.'

'That is only reasonable,' El Pajarillo agreed. 'And it is proper to make a stand about the fighting. Fighting is good enough in the right place, but it would not be seemly to spill good Spanish blood over the affairs of foreigners.'

'Then you are satisfied?'

'Señor, I am satisfied. The work is good, and the pay is good. But I would have you know this, that though I will take your pay—being a poor man, as I have said—I do not work for the sake of the pay alone. I work for vengeance. For it is not yet a month since my brother Pedro was drowned by those sea-

murderers on a voyage between here and Marseilles. A Spaniard, on a Spanish ship! His orphan children are in my house, señor, and his memory is in my heart.' The Catalan smote himself on the breast with a sudden blaze of passion, in curious contrast to his previous calm manner. Next moment the fire that had flashed in his dark eyes seemed to go out again. 'One thing puzzles me,' he said quietly. 'If there is a claim, how will you know that the claim is good?'

'I shall be there to help you to make it so, Pajarillo *mio*. We British do not pay other men to take our risks for us. You will report to me every time you get such knowledge as will enable you to make an attempt to earn the reward.'

The Little Bird rose from the seat to his full height, and smiled. 'I propose to make the first one to-night,' he said.

Bruce started. '*Valgame Dios!* but you work quickly, my friend.'

'The quicker the work, the sooner the pay. Do you come with me?'

'I have said so.'

'Then go, half-an-hour after sunset, to the "Venta del Pescador," at the south end of the Calle Cristobal, and ask for a bottle of English beer. The landlord will hand you, with your

beer, a bundle of clothes, and show you a room where you can put them on. He will let you into the street by another door, and you will go and loiter by the office of the Balearic Islands steamers till you see me.'

'One would think you had planned all this a month ago!'

'Señor, a *contrabandista's* gun must be always loaded.'

There was a quiet air of assurance about the Little Bird, and he bore himself with an easy dignity almost Castilian. He seemed perfectly straightforward, but Bruce could not help feeling a little uneasy at the rapidity with which Pajarillo had arranged to capture a U-boat's cargo of stores. He kept his suspicions to himself, however, and promising to carry out the appointed programme, he took his departure.

II.

It had been night for a couple of hours when two men, one elderly and the other young, wearing fishermen's clothes and the red Catalan bonnet, walked down to the landing-stage of the fashionable Barcelona Yacht Club. The elder paused for a moment beside a light dinghy which was drawn up on the beach, and looked full at his companion.

‘You are quite resolved to come with me?’ he inquired. ‘I warn you, Señor Bruce, this is a ticklish business.’

The young Scot gave a low laugh. ‘The fee is calculated on that basis.’

‘Good!’ said the Little Bird. ‘You take your life in your hands, but I see that you have a man’s eyes in the face of a boy, and I am not afraid to have you with me. These gentlemen who emulate the prophet Jonah in their methods of travel are horribly quick-witted, and if they found us trying to trick them, we should not try again. Come.’

They shoved the dinghy into the water. The Catalan pulled across the dark harbour to a large fishing-smack lying at her moorings. They scrambled aboard, and the rigging creaked as the big brown sail slowly climbed the raking mast.

In a few minutes the smack was gliding through the shipping towards the outer harbour. She passed beyond the mole, and leaned bravely to her work as she took the open sea. The land lines dimmed behind them along the rocky coast. For an hour they sailed in full darkness over the sea. Their boat showed no lights, but in the stern a red spot glowed where the black shape of the Little Bird sat smoking at the tiller, and

around the dipping bows the sea—that sea so intensely blue when the sun shines on it—flashed in the night with a myriad sparks of green. At length, in the far south-east, where the Balearic Isles lay under the horizon, the waning moon rose from the water's brim.

El Pajarillo asked suddenly, 'Do you write poetry, Señor Bruce?'

'I have done so,' replied the Scot, surprised at the question.

'Most young men do,' the smuggler said. 'And some older men.'

'Are you, then, a poet, Little Bird?'

'Hardly so much. Yet, sometimes, I have set down the thoughts which a man has, young sir, on such a night as this. In our Floral Contests, the wreath has sometimes been given to me. But you are English, and do not know of these contests of our Catalans. And yet you understand our idiom, which is strange in a foreigner.'

'I love Spain,' Bruce answered simply. 'It is a hobby of mine to understand all her dialects. Tell me of your contests.'

'They say that here in Cataluña we talk a savage jargon, and have no poets,' pursued the Little Bird. 'But every year, back there in Barcelona, from all places where the Catalan

speech is heard, down all this eastern shore, and from the Balearics, men compete with verse and song, for no reward but simply a wreath of flowers. If you care to listen, I will recite to you what I have felt on such a night as this.'

'I am listening,' said Bruce. The strange personality of the Little Bird began to grow upon him.

The smuggler's voice seemed to take on something of the murmur of the waves as he repeated a few short verses, soothful as a charm. The Scot, his head in his hands, found himself recalling the Vergil of his college days. He thought of Palinurus, the helmsman of Æneas, swooning under that night of stars when the magic voices sounded from the deep, till he fell from the high poop, and was lost for evermore.

'You wrote that?' exclaimed Bruce.

'Not in my name, señor. El Pajarillo is the name of a doer, not a dreamer. But I wrote it down, because I felt it. Now, tell me what you have felt.'

'My verses were written in English,' said Bruce.

'Never mind. If they are good, they will have their harmony. Ah—pardon a moment! Did you see anything?'

‘I thought I saw a red flash in the north-east.’

‘Wait a little, and watch if it comes again.’

In a few minutes they saw the flash again, faint but unmistakable—three red sparks that winked across the sea. The Little Bird dived into the cockpit of the boat, and came out with a dark lantern. Five green flashes he sent across the sea. They were answered by a single flash of red. The Catalan put down the darkened lantern, and resumed his seat at the tiller.

‘Now for your verses, señor. But keep low down forward. You must not be seen.’

Never in his life had Donald Bruce felt in a less poetic mood. His blood was dancing with the excitement of action. But he had conceived a sudden and immense respect for the keen old Catalan at the helm, and in a level voice he repeated some verses which he had once composed in Edinburgh while lying on Arthur’s Seat, looking out across the Pentland Hills.

El Pajarillo grunted. ‘It sounds well, señor. It sounds very well. You must compose me something in the Spanish. Now, have the goodness to get under that sacking. I am going to lower the sail.’

The smack came up into the wind, and the

great gaff creaked down the mast. They rocked easily on the calm sea.

They had not waited five minutes, when close beside them the shimmer of the moonlight on the waves was broken as by the back of a great fish. The conning-tower of a submarine rose from the water. In the forepart of the wicked-looking craft a gun was trained on the smack. A voice hailed them in careful Castilian, spoken with a harsh, guttural accent.

‘What boat is that?’

‘Not the boat which you expect, *señor capitán*,’ answered the voice of El Pajarillo. ‘The British Secret Service has heard something. Something is suspected. Juan de Roca is watched. He is afraid. Three English destroyers are hunting off the coast. Juan sent me to warn you. *Por Dios*, Juan is in a fine way! His boat is lying in the port deep laden, all ready, but he dared not put to sea to-night. There will be trouble with the Government if he is caught.’

There was an unmistakable sound of Teutonic cursing from the submarine’s deck.

‘What is your name?’ snapped the officer.

‘Sebastian Dombre, at your honour’s service, Venta del Pescador, Calle Cristobal, Barcelona.’

The prompt precision of the answer seemed to mollify the German a little.

‘These destroyers—where are they?’ he demanded.

‘*Dios sabe!* They were off the coast here all afternoon, circling round and round, making one giddy to watch them. And at a speed—*caramba*, what a speed! If they should catch me here, I am a lost man.’

‘Come aboard,’ cried the German. ‘You must send a telegram for me.’

‘I am at your honour’s feet. But as for coming aboard, I have no boat, nor men to pull her if I had. For this business, *señor capitán*, one man is useful, but two is a crowd. It is dangerous, *por Dios!* If you would send a boat for me? But, for the love of Heaven, be quick! If these English destroyers, which are the very devil, should pick us up with their searchlights, I in my poor boat cannot sink into safety like you.’

The German cursed again. ‘I have no time to get out a boat, my friend. Fling me a line.’

The Little Bird complied with alacrity. A rope was made fast to the gun-mounting of the submarine, and the U-boat went slowly astern, while the officer descended the conning-tower. Round the gun a group of sailors

stood motionless as bronze figures. The Little Bird sat with his hand on the tiller of the smack, keeping her head straight as she towed slowly on the line.

In a very few minutes the German officer returned on deck, fastened something to the line on which the smack was towing, and ordered his crew to cast off.

‘You will hand in the telegram, which you will find fastened in a rubber bag on your rope, at the first opportunity at the Barcelona office,’ he cried. ‘You will tell your countryman, Juan Roca, that the German Navy pays on results, and not on promises. If the order contained in that telegram is faithfully executed, he will receive his payment through the usual source. *Vaya con Dios!*’

He snapped a guttural order to his crew, who promptly followed him into the body of the U-boat. The gun sank as though by magic into the whale-like body of the vessel, which a few seconds later disappeared beneath the water, leaving nothing but a tiny white wake in the moonlight where her periscope splashed through the calm sea as she sped on her stealthy way in the night.

With great deliberation El Pajarillo drew in the slack of his tow-line and unfastened the little waterproof bag containing the German’s

message. Very deliberately he hoisted sail, and stood away for the distant Spanish coast.

‘If you will take my advice, Señor Bruce,’ said he to his hidden passenger, ‘you will not expose yourself to view till we have put a reasonable distance between ourselves and those gentry yonder. They are as full of tricks as a wagon-load of monkeys. When you are wanted I shall call you.’

III.

For half-an-hour they sailed in silence over the dreaming sea. Then said the Little Bird, ‘It is your turn now, señor. Here comes Juan with his boatload of supplies which the Germans are running away from.’

The Scot came out of his hiding-place. Between them and the land a sail was approaching.

‘What are we to do now?’ asked Bruce.

‘That is for you to decide, señor,’ said the Little Bird respectfully. ‘As for me, I have earned my five thousand pesetas. I take no action against my countrymen.’

Bruce considered the situation. ‘If I bluff them,’ he asked, ‘you will support me?’

‘I will stand by you, señor, except to offer violence to a Spaniard. And I beg you to

observe that I do not wish to be identified in this business.'

At that moment three red flashes showed from the distant sailing-boat.

'Very well,' Bruce said. 'Answer those flashes as the Germans answered us.'

El Pajarillo did so. Almost immediately the approaching smack lowered her sails.

'Is this your own boat?' asked the Scot.

The Little Bird laughed. 'Señor Bruce, I am not so simple. They will not know me by the boat.'

'Give me the tiller,' said Bruce shortly. 'Hide yourself as much as you can if you do not want to be recognised, but go forward and be ready to lower sail when I give the word.'

The smuggler gave up the tiller, and, without a word spoken, proceeded to strip off his clothing till he stood mother-naked in the faint moonlight.

'What are you doing?' asked the astonished Scot.

'Concealing myself,' said the Catalan, with a chuckle. 'There is sometimes no more effective way of concealing one's self than by revealing one's self entirely. Unless you can see his face, it is impossible to identify a naked man in the dark. Thanks be to God, the night is warm.' He snatched off the red

Robespierre cap of his province, and twisted his shirt round his head in the manner of a turban. 'They will be surprised,' said he calmly. 'A man surprised is already half conquered.'

Bruce gave a little excited laugh. He ran on to within a few yards of the strange smack, and then quickly gave the order to slack the halyards. His naked companion, an eerie figure in the darkness, leaped up from the cockpit, and down came the big sail. The boat's way carried her close to the new-comers.

Bruce left the tiller and ran forward. 'Throw a line,' he cried, making his Spanish as harsh as he could. 'I come from the German captain.'

There was a momentary stir on the second smack, but a line came flying, and Bruce caught it right seaman-like and made fast. Out of the corner of his eye he saw the naked figure of his companion standing over the tiller. The smacks drifted together so that they almost touched.

'Listen, all of you, and mark my words!' cried Bruce. 'I have come from the German captain, as I told you, but the German captain and all his crew are sunk beneath the sea. The sea, gentlemen, is the hunting-ground of Britain, and the night about you is full of eyes.'

A man of the smack's crew moved towards the tow-rope.

‘Leave that rope,’ thundered Bruce, ‘or I signal to the watching eyes of the sea! Obey me, and you may take your boat back to Barcelona with the morning light. Disobey, and your death lies at your own door!’

‘Who are you?’ came a voice in scared surprise.

Bruce laughed. ‘I am one of Britain's eyes,’ he cried. ‘Juan de Roca, I give you fifteen minutes to heave overboard every ounce of that which you have brought for the German submarine's captain. He will meet it, perhaps, at the bottom of the Mediterranean.’ He laughed again. ‘Do you hear?’ he cried.

‘Yes, I hear.’

‘Then, hurry. And I am coming aboard to see it done. Hoist your foresail, and we will tow astern. Quick!’

He heard an order given, and, to his immense relief, the strange smack's foresail fluttered up in the light air. Bruce shouted an order in English to El Pajarillo, which that individual neither understood nor was intended to understand. He kept his hand on the tiller, however, which was what the order told him to do, and Bruce, hauling on the tow-line, leaped

aboard Juan's boat, where he took his stand with a revolver beside the steersman.

The fishermen, thoroughly deceived by his assurance, and by the unexpectedness of the whole thing, were already throwing overside one heavy package after another. The boat's deckboards were hastily pulled up, and can after can of oil and spirit was committed to the sea. Not a word more spoke the young Scot, standing there like a very pirate, with his red cap pulled down almost over his eyes, and careful not to expose his back to the helmsman. The boat, which reeked of oil, already floated perceptibly lighter in the water.

At last it was done. The emptying had been very thorough, and though Bruce could not be sure that everything had gone, he felt that sufficient justice had been done to the situation. The smack's captain, a stout, evil-looking fellow, whom he recognised as the man he had overheard boasting on the quay, came up to him in a truculent manner.

‘Señor Englishman, where do I get payment for all this wasted cargo?’

Bruce laughed. ‘I should advise an application at the German Consulate, Señor Roca. My advice would also include a warning that for the future your fishing will be watched

with a peculiar interest by the coast patrol. *Adios, Señor Roca!* You may now make sail. *Buen viaje!*' Bruce deliberately turned his back on the furious Catalan, and hauled on the tow-line till his own smack was close enough for a leap aboard. Then he threw off the tow-rope. He picked up the Little Bird's dark lantern, and sent two red flashes across the sea, as though signalling.

Juan de Roca was a prudent man. At the sight of those flashes he was glad he had resisted the sore temptation which had beset him to stick his knife into the back of this Britisher. Already his big sail was climbing his mast, and a few minutes later his discomfited crew were well on their way home.

'We will wait here a little while,' said Bruce. 'While we are waiting you might put your clothes on. I should not like you to catch a chill, oh my Little Bird. We will run down the coast a little before we land. It would be imprudent to go ashore just now at Barcelona. We can, perhaps, have a little more poetry on the way back. You will hand me the German's telegram, and by-and-by I shall hand you the five thousand pesetas. And I hope it may not be the last time you and I go hunting together.'

THE AGENCY AT SOLLER.

I.

THE shadows cast by the lantern moved to and fro to the swing of the vessel as Donald Bruce sat in the tiny cabin of the Spanish fishing-boat, poring over the message which he and his companion had been ordered to hand in at the telegraph-office at Barcelona.

The message which Bruce was studying was written in fair Castilian on a page torn from a note-book. Being translated, it ran: 'Frankenfest, Soller. Our representative will honour himself by calling on you on Saturday about one o'clock to inspect your stock with view to important purchases.—RETNU & Co.'

Bruce came out on deck, and went to where the lean figure of the Little Bird sprawled at the tiller. 'Pajarillo *mio*,' said he, 'how long will it take us to make port?'

'With this head-wind, señor, six hours at the least.'

The Scot repeated to him the message he had just read. 'Do you know of a firm of the name of Retnu?'

'*Hombre!* What a name! I never heard of it before.'

‘I thought not. Suppose we spell it backwards. We get *Unter*, which is Boche for “under,” Little Bird. The message means, I take it, that at one o’clock on Saturday Señor Underwater and his friends will try to get from this Frankenfest fellow at Soller a cargo of stores such as we have just stopped him from getting at Barcelona.’

‘Clearly,’ agreed the Little Bird.

‘It is a head-wind for the mainland, but it is a fair wind for the Balearics, is it not?’

‘Very true, señor.’

‘If we could contrive to put a spoke in the wheel of this Frankenfest, it would be another five thousand pesetas in your pocket, Pajarillo.’

‘Under the terms of our agreement, that would be so,’ said the Catalan. ‘But I would beg you to observe, Señor Bruce, that it is a long way from here to Soller. It would take us three days and nights of sailing if the wind holds fair. And we are not provisioned for so long a journey.’

‘We have enough to drink,’ said the Scot; ‘and there are fish in the sea.’

‘But there is also the German submarine in the sea. Suppose our fine captain sights us going east, whereas he told us to go west? In that case it will be the fish that will get us, and not we the fish, Señor Bruce.’

‘Very true,’ said Bruce. ‘And yet, Pajarillo, five thousand pesetas’——

‘Señor, do not misunderstand me. I was only indicating that difficulties exist. The cause is a good cause; and a good cause, supported by five thousand pesetas, will always command the respectful consideration of Pablo el Pajarillo. Mind the boom, señor—I am going about.’

The Little Bird pushed the tiller down as he spoke, and a minute later the boat, her big lateen sail filling before the favouring breeze, was heading due east to where the horizon was already paling for the dawn.

The boat was an ancient craft, but seaworthy enough, and the westerly wind followed them loyally for a couple of days and nights, during which they took alternate tricks at the tiller. They caught little fish, being anxious to get on their way without delay, and by the evening of the second day they were both pretty sharp-set.

‘I could make a fine verse about a plate of soup,’ said the smuggler.

‘How far do you reckon it to Mallorca?’ asked the Scot, as they sat smoking while the sun went down. Fortunately they had plenty of tobacco.

‘Fifty miles.’

‘The distance from London to Brighton,’ muttered Bruce. ‘They serve a good meal on the week-end Pullman. Suppose the wind drops, Little Bird?’

‘Then we will fish.’

‘I could eat a whale,’ said Bruce. He took a look round the waste of deep-blue sea, and suddenly stood up. ‘Look, Pajarillo! There is a steamer yonder to the eastward. If we shift a point or two she will pass within hail. Perhaps she will give us a few loaves.’

The Catalan shrugged. ‘More likely she would take us for a decoy, and show us a pair of heels. *Madre de Dios!* what is that?’

An awful detonation came across the sea. Where the steamer had been, three or four miles away, a dense black cloud, shot through with crimson fire, rose from the sea against the paling eastern sky. It lifted slowly, and showed the steamer still there, but with one mast instead of two, and belching smoke and flame.

‘Torpedoed!’ shouted Bruce. ‘Quick, Pajarillo—to the rescue!’

‘I think we are like to want rescue ourselves if we go that way,’ said the Spaniard grimly. ‘But it shows you read the telegram aright!’

Without more ado he shifted the helm, and they sailed towards the burning vessel.

Bruce was watching her intently. 'She won't last till we reach her,' he groaned. 'God! Look at that!'

As a diving porpoise throws up his tail, so the stricken steamer suddenly threw up her dismasted stern and plunged bodily beneath the waves. A great cloud of mingled smoke and steam hung for a few moments above the place of her disappearing, and then the sea rolled cold and empty in the dusk.

No, not quite empty. Straining their eyes, they perceived a tiny black spot.

'A boat!' said the smuggler, grey-faced in the fading light. 'Yah! If I had that sea-murderer's throat in my two hands!'

The black spot grew slowly clearer as they sailed towards it. Of the murderers there was no sign. By-and-by they reached the boat, and lowered sail for the rescue.

Half-a-dozen nerve-shattered men were in the boat, one with his leg broken; three women; a child of four with a crushed arm; and two dead bodies singed with fire. These were all that were left of a ship's company of threescore. They had not an ounce of food or a drop of drink among them.

The adventurers helped the poor creatures

on to the fishing-boat, and towing the ship's boat, made sail again for the Balearics. The ship had been an Italian vessel, from Naples to Valencia. There had been no warning. They had not even seen their murderers.

On through the starry night sailed the Spanish craft, the westerly wind still filling her sails, and the sea sparkling phosphorescent in her wake.

At midnight Bruce was at the tiller, steering a course which the Little Bird had set him by the stars. Suddenly a blinding light enveloped the little vessel. Several of the shipwrecked Italians sat up on the deck, where they had been stretched, their faces white in the dazzling ray. As swiftly and silently as it had flashed on them, the light vanished. For a few minutes they held their course. Then came a swishing sound close astern. A low black shape raced up alongside, churning the water white with her railway speed ere her engines slowed, and through a megaphone a hoarse voice challenged in French and ordered them to heave to.

Pajarillo the smuggler emerged from the cabin, where he had been nursing the injured child, and lowered sail; while Bruce pulled in the boat towing astern, and went aboard the destroyer to tell his story. He came back

with a lieutenant, a surgeon, and a case of stores.

Before the two officers returned to their ship they shook hands with extreme cordiality with both the young Scot and his companion, and the lieutenant said some things which made Bruce glad of the darkness to cover his blushes. The lieutenant had approved the fishing-vessel's programme, but had pointed out that this was Thursday night, and that there was no time to lose. '*Bonne chance!*' said he. 'We also shall try to be at the rendezvous. You may not see us, but you may hear us if we have good hunting. *Après la guerre*, Little Bird, you shall fly to visit me in Paris.'

Again the sea churned white as the black shape sped away into the night, and the smuggler hoisted sail again for the islands.

II.

The breeze held steady through the night, but lost its force at dawn. There was a haze over the sea as the sun came up, but El Pajarillo, shading tired eyes with his wrinkled brown hands, said he saw the mountains of Mallorca. Sure enough, another hour's sailing brought them well in sight of land.

El Pajarillo called the mate of the Italian

steamer, who was among the rescued, and—Bruce interpreting—asked if he wished to avenge the loss of his ship and men. The flash of the eye and the fierce gleam of teeth between the black moustache and beard were answer enough.

‘I am going to steal your boat, *amigo mio*, but I am going to leave you my little ship. Sail her into Palma yonder. Our Mallorquins are hospitable. Tell them how the cursed Germans sank your ship. It will do you no harm to hint that they came up from behind a deserted Spanish fishing-boat—this boat of mine—and that you who survive were able to get on board and make for Mallorca. It is giving the murdering Jonahs more credit than they are entitled to, but my friend and I, *por Dios!* will set the balance right for you if we can. Above all, let none of you breathe a word of the French warship. So shall your dead be avenged. Do you swear it?’

His right hand on his heart, his left outstretched to the blue sky, the Italian vowed compliance. Then, with the tears running down his face, he kissed his rescuer on both cheeks ere the Little Bird climbed down with Bruce into the smaller boat.

This, too, had a small mast and sail, and

before midday El Pajarillo, who knew the rocky island coasts like the palm of his hand, brought her to land at a lonely spot not too far from their destination.

Then, through the hot, vine-clad hills, the two adventurers made their way to Soller. They came to that pleasant valley about sunset, and as they went down towards the village they fell in with a goat-herd driving in his flock for the evening milking. With this youth the Little Bird opened conversation, confiding to him, among other things of less account, that his name was Juan de Roca, a sailor from Barcelona. Now Juan de Roca, as Bruce very well remembered, was the name of the man whose efforts to supply the German U-boat with its needed stores they had just frustrated. For the Little Bird calmly to appropriate his luckless countryman's name and address struck the Scot as a very neat piece of impudence.

Having regaled the admiring goat-herd with several fantastic tales such as the sailors of all nations are addicted to telling, El Pajarillo asked him casually, 'And do you happen to know if there is still in Soller a fellow named Frankenfest, a German?'

'Why,' said the boy, 'it is he who keeps the store at the corner of our street.'

‘In that case, little friend of mine, it will be easy for you to earn five pesetas.’

The lad’s dark eyes gleamed.

‘God helping you,’ said the smuggler, ‘you might, as a sharp lad, make ten. The point is this. My friend and I have to get back to Palma with the least possible delay. You have only to take this message’—here the Little Bird produced the scrap of paper the German captain had given him—‘and deliver it into Señor Frankenfest’s own hands. His own hands, understand—not his wife’s, nor anybody else’s in the world.’

‘I understand, Señor de Roca.’

‘Very well. Here is five pesetas. Can you read?’

‘No.’

‘No matter. Having delivered the paper, you will ask Señor Frankenfest for another five pesetas, though you will not be so great a fool as to tell him you have already received any. Probably he will offer you less, but he will certainly ask you from whom you had the message. It is then that you will use your wits, little one, and tell him no more till you have the money in your hand. See?’

‘Perfectly, Señor de Roca,’ grinned the boy.

‘Then, *adelante!* We part here. In case

you would like to know what is in the paper, I may tell you, since you seem a sharp lad, that it informs Señor Frankenfest that a client intends calling on him to-morrow on important business. So now you know as much as I do. *Adios!*'

As soon as the goat-herd had disappeared with his charges round a bend of the road, El Pajarillo, instead of setting out for Palma, sat down by a hedge of flowering cactus and calmly lit a cigarette. 'It is about one o'clock on Saturday,' said he between his puffs, 'that the precious representative of this precious under-water villain will do himself the honour to call on Señor Frankenfest to make his important purchases. The question is, *amigo mio*, which one o'clock?'

'I should say one hour after midnight, Little Bird.'

The smuggler nodded. 'From now till one in the morning you and I must watch this Frankenfest as a cat watches a mouse. Something tells me we shall spend a busy night, Señor Bruce.'

'The busier the better, Little Bird,' smiled the Scot.

They smoked a cigarette each, and went on quietly to the village. It was quite dark when they reached the *plaza*; but in Soller,

as in many another village of that Spain which some think so backward, there is a sufficient service of electric light, and in the glow of a lamp over Frankenfest's store they had the satisfaction of seeing from a little distance their goat-herd in altercation with a stout man in the doorway. After a few minutes the lad departed, putting something in his pocket.

‘That is a sharp lad,’ said Bruce. ‘Do you suppose the German suspects anything?’

‘Why should he?’ the Little Bird demanded. ‘He is an agent for this submarine fellow, and he has his employer's signature. What more does the villain want?’

III.

It was a little after nine. As they stood smoking and watching the store from the convenient shadow of a fig-tree, a civil guard approached. They engaged him in conversation, explaining that they had missed the last train back to Palma by the little island railway, and inquiring as to a cheap *posada* in which they might pass the night. Both still wore the fisherman's dress in which they had embarked from Barcelona.

Suddenly Bruce noticed the stout figure emerge from the store and walk away down

the road at a smart pace. The Little Bird did not seem to have observed the fact, being apparently entirely engrossed in discussing the comparative merit of two houses which the guard had mentioned. In vain Bruce sought to catch his comrade's eye, and his impatience increased each moment as the German became gradually lost to view in the darkness. Only then did the old smuggler seem reluctantly to make up his mind, and with what seemed a needless profusion of thanks, and the deferential offer of a cigarette to the guard, he took a polite leave, and the two friends started very deliberately down the long street.

‘Pajarillo, we shall lose our man! He went down the road while you were arguing with the guard,’ said Bruce the moment they were out of earshot.

‘Not so fast, my friend,’ chuckled the old *contrabandista*. ‘You are a good Spaniard for most purposes, but you have not learned that in this country one must hasten slowly, and not omit the little ceremonies of life. Now I must go into the *posada* and arrange for our night's lodging, in case our friend the guard should take it into his head to look in for us. I shall explain that we have a call to make before supper.’

‘But meantime our man has disappeared.’

‘We shall find him. Look you, Señor Bruce, while I am in the inn you will follow this German. There is no turning from this road till you get near the sea. You will sight him before he can turn aside; and you will follow him. Whenever you come to a turning, you will drop a bit of paper at the entrance of the road he has taken. He will go eventually to the sea—we know that—and when you have tracked him to the end of his journey, you will wait for me. In a quarter of an hour I shall be with you.’ He glanced behind. ‘It is safe now—you can run.’

Bruce ran in the direction the German had taken, his feet, on which he wore the rope *alpargatas* of the Spanish peasant, making no sound. Very soon he sighted his quarry, walking stolidly towards the sea. But instead of going straight down to the tiny rock-encircled port where the fishermen of Soller moor their boats, the German presently turned from the main road and followed a track which led up on to the cliffs, away from the town. Bruce dropped his guiding-paper, and as they left the lights behind, drew nearer to his man.

For a couple of miles the German walked along a rough byroad which became little more than a mule-track; then he struck off

the track altogether, and made straight across a terraced vineyard on the hillside in the direction of the Mediterranean. It was so dark that Bruce had little hope of El Pajarillo observing any guiding signs; but, in conformity with his instructions, he scattered several pieces of paper at the edge of the mule-track, and then laid a thin, straight line of them in the direction taken by the German.

Suddenly the cliff dropped away at his feet. He had come to a steep cleft running inland from the sea for several hundred yards. The secret agent had disappeared down the rugged face of the cleft. Searching about in the darkness, which the faint light of the rising moon was beginning to make less dense, the Scot found a practicable descent, and with infinite caution began to go down. He reached the foot of the cliff and the sea-beach with less difficulty than he had anticipated, and found himself on a tiny stretch of white sand. Of his man there was for the moment no sign.

Bruce crouched still and listened. There was no sound but the sighing of the little waves along the rocky shore. He realised that to leave the shadow of the cliff would be to risk detection. For what seemed a long time he kept silent in the shelter of the cliff.

The moonlight strengthened gradually, and at length Bruce crept to the margin of the shadow, and held his watch in the light to see the time. It was past eleven.

He was creeping back to the cliffside, when the firm grasp of a hand on his arm made him start violently. Next moment, with profound astonishment, he recognised his Catalan companion. A whisper came in his ear: '*Por Dios*, Señor Bruce, we shall have good hunting to-night! Do you know the caves of Manacor?'

'No.'

'They are on the other side of Mallorca—great stalactite caverns that go far under the shore. Every Mallorquin knows of them; but few know that there is also such a cave within an hour of Soller. This Frankenfest is clever! Never mind. Set a thief to catch a thief, and an old smuggler to catch a secret agent. Now, listen to me. We have nothing more to do but to wait here in the shadow till this fellow's confederates come ashore. Then we must do what we can to preserve the neutrality of Spain, and earn our five thousand pesetas. The cave is a little way up the gully yonder. A signal flashed in the gully can be seen only from the sea. Do you watch the gully, while I watch the water.'

They watched steadily for half-an-hour.

Suddenly the glare of an electric torch shone down the gully so powerfully that the two men crouched low against the bottom of the cliff. The beam was shut off. Within a few seconds there was a red light visible far to seaward, which vanished almost immediately. Then three short flashes from the gully were answered by three red flashes from the water, and darkness fell again.

‘This bit of sand is the only landing-place for miles,’ muttered the smuggler.

Another half-hour of waiting passed. Then, above the faint splash of the wavelets, they caught the low, rhythmic sound of oars working in muffled rowlocks. A boat, all painted white, even to the oars, with sailors dressed also in white, appeared suddenly on the sea, close to the shore.

The Little Bird gave a low chuckle. ‘By night all cats are grey,’ he quoted. ‘But cats in a white fur show least in a faint light against the sea. Oh, these fellows are no fools, Señor Bruce.’

The white boat grounded on the white sand, and as she did so the stout figure of Frankenfest emerged from the gully. He shook hands with the officer of the boat, which contained half-a-dozen men. The whole party,

with the exception of one man, immediately walked up the beach and entered the gully.

‘*Hombre!*’ muttered the Catalan; ‘we could not have arranged it better ourselves. Can you run?’

‘I used to run for my college a few years back,’ said the Scot. ‘Shall we rush that fellow in the boat?’

‘Precisely. It is five hundred yards from the cave, and a roughish path. But I warn you, Señor Bruce, they may shoot.’

‘They may miss,’ said the Scot.

‘Bravo! You can pull an oar?’

‘Pretty well.’

‘*Bueno!* See! the boatman is looking seawards. When they are right into the gully, we shall run like the wind for that boat. The first there will deal with the man, and the other will seize the oars and pull for the point of the bluff yonder. It is only a few hundred yards, and then we shall be out of range round the corner. *Coraje!* Are you ready?’

‘Ready!’

‘Then go!’

Like two dogs loosed on a hare, the companions raced forward across the narrow stretch of sand. The younger man was leading by half-a-dozen yards when they reached the boat, and not till he sprang over the gunwale did

the German sailor in the stern become aware of their presence. He turned with a wild shout; but before he could put hand to weapon Bruce was on him, knocking him backward over the thwart with a lightning blow between the eyes. The Scot fell on top of his man as the boat, already three parts in the water, was shoved off by the lusty arms of the old smuggler. Pajarillo tumbled, dripping, aboard, and in a moment had seized the oars and was thrusting seawards with swift, strong strokes.

‘Get down low, and take the tiller!’ cried the Catalan, though he himself stood fearlessly in his gaunt height, working the oars.

Bruce was obeying, when the stunned German, recovering from his knock-down blow, sat up. ‘*Kamerad!*’ he gasped.

‘*Kamerads* all ashore!’ retorted the Scot dourly, and without more ado he tipped the man bodily over the side into the sea.

Urged by the smuggler’s nervy arms, the boat was making progress towards the bluff. Out of the corner of his eye Bruce saw the crew come running to the water’s edge. A revolver cracked, and a white splinter flew from one of the oars. The revolver cracked again, and Bruce felt his left arm, holding the tiller, go numb. He shifted to his right.

‘Faster! Faster, Pajarillo!’ he cried.

More shots followed, flying wide, and the Catalan's breath came hard as he leaned to and fro to his work.

Far out to sea a shaft of light swung round the horizon.

Donald Bruce was feeling horribly faint. He pulled himself together. He saw the German seamen run along the shore, and heard the revolver-shots cracking again. But out to sea he saw the shaft of light fasten on a dark object lying low in the water. A moment later a dull, angry boom thundered over the sea. Another, and another. A livid sheet of flame, red and green and yellow, shot upward from the end of the beam. Then the sea swallowed the flame, and the beam was gone.

'Good hunting, by the Lord, Pajarillo!' cried Bruce, and rolled senseless across the tiller.

When Bruce came to himself a man in a blue uniform, with gold braid on it, was watching him with an agreeable expression. The Scot recognised the surgeon of the French destroyer.

'Monsieur,' said the surgeon, 'I have here some excellent *bouillon*.'

'Where is El Paj—— Where is my friend?' said Bruce.

‘Your friend is taking supper with our commander, who has opened a bottle of the best, but unfortunately cannot speak Spanish. Permit me to say that you nearly lost your arm. How many Boches are there ashore yonder?’

‘Seven, with the officer.’

‘It was fortunate for them that you took their boat,’ said the surgeon grimly.

‘And their ship?’ asked Bruce.

‘*Là bas!*’ said the surgeon, pointing through the floor. ‘We have just sent a wireless to the *capitanía general* at Palma, informing the authorities, with our compliments, that a band of German sailors are waiting at Soller to be interned.’

.
A few days later the confidential clerk to M‘Ilroy, M‘Ilroy, & M‘Allister came out of the firm’s private office. He was immaculately dressed, but his left arm was in a sling. Beside him, smoking a *puro* of the best, walked the brown-faced old *contrabandista* called the Little Bird. The Little Bird was putting a wad of notes carefully inside his red Robespierre cap.

‘Ten thousand pesetas—not a bad week’s work, *mi Pajarillo?*’ smiled Bruce as he shook hands.

‘Excellent, señor. I confess that this business interests me. Between you and me, I have made up my mind to accept the offer of your honourable house, to continue in this line for a time. I have been a spendthrift fellow, but if I could make up twenty thousand pesetas to provide for my family—I have a large family, Señor Bruce, and my poor brother Pedro’s orphans are also on my hands—I should face the future with a better heart. Permit me to say that I am proud to be associated with a man of business who is also a poet, like yourself.’

‘Life is full of poetry, if one views it from the proper angle,’ said Bruce sententiously.

‘I shall endeavour to compose a few verses on our week’s work, señor,’ said the Catalan with perfect gravity. ‘You, I venture to hope, will do the same. And as soon as I discover another suitable subject for a composition, I shall communicate with you without delay.’

‘The sooner the better, Little Bird,’ said Bruce.

THE SECRET OF THE SIERRA.

I.

AS his tired mule stumbled wearily up the arid gorge towards the lowering sun, El Pajarillo almost wished he had kept to simple contraband, and never gone in for this wild business of hunting for U-boat supply bases.

Though it was the middle of September, the sun all day had been merciless, and the barren grey peaks of the Sierra were still bathed in a mist of heat. Now the mist was turning to a ruby tint in the west, where Granada lay.

At the head of the gorge a jagged, rocky hill stood sharply against the ruddy west. A ruined castle crowned its height, and on the side of the hill, just below, El Pajarillo knew there was a spring. He did not quite like the look of the sky, and as it was clear he could not reach Granada that night, he resolved, though with some misgivings, to camp in the ruin.

The mule objected to climb the hill, but the Little Bird knew that a mule objects to everything on principle, and his own arguments were so much to the point that while the sun

was still above the sky-line he had got his beast stabled in a sheltered corner of the ruin, and had drawn water for himself and it. Of provisions he had good store, for no Spanish traveller of experience trusts to luck for a supper. The Little Bird climbed up the crumbling stairway of an old tower, and sat down by the parapet to eat his meal.

Sitting there, he commanded what the guide-books would call a magnificent panorama. East and west, north and south of him, the rugged Sierra, burnt brown by the blaze of summer heat, reared its naked rocks against the sky. It had been a painful ordeal for man and beast to endure the noonday heat of those deep defiles and steep brown slopes. Yet the cautious investigations of several weeks had convinced Bruce and himself that somewhere among those defiles, just off the road between Motril and Granada, the object of their search must lie.

Suddenly El Pajarillo started. Out of the mountainous desert a cavalcade was advancing. He crouched lower behind the parapet, and watched. The horsemen came on very deliberately. He counted thirteen of them—a large company to be in such a spot. They all wore the ordinary dress of the Andalusian countryman—wide felt hats, short coats,

hitched over one shoulder on account of the heat, and about their middles sashes of red or black. The Little Bird watched them put their horses to the hill, and advance towards the old ruin. He then noticed that one of the riders was blindfolded.

They made a circuit round the hill as they came up, and so approached the castle on the side opposite that to which El Pajarillo had come. A projection of the ground hid them as they got nearer, and he waited for them to reappear. But they did not.

The Little Bird was not superstitious, but he had heard—as what Spaniard has not?—grandfathers' tales about enchanted castles, the treasure-stores of vanished Moors, which hold in their secret grasp spell-bound men and horses, that come out once in a long while to entrap the unwary to their doom. He felt that the hour and the place were uncanny.

Descending from the tower, he went cautiously down the hill to the spot where he had last seen the horsemen. They were not there. Searching about, however, among the great rocks on which the old castle had been raised, he found a cleft, and following this, he presently caught the sound of voices, till suddenly, at the turn of a corner, he came full upon the

assembly. A tall man, with a bright-red sash about his waist, and a flower stuck in his hat, sprang forward and gripped him by the arm, while half-a-dozen threatening faces, and as many revolver-barrels, were directed towards him.

‘What is this, and who are you, old spy?’ demanded the man who held him.

The Little Bird was taken entirely by surprise, and his acute intelligence could not fail to observe that there was an element of danger in his position, the more especially as he perceived with a shock that the blindfolded man in the midst of the group was no other than his young Scots employer, Donald Bruce. It did not take him many seconds to make up his mind that the strict truth was inappropriate to the occasion.

‘I am Julianio Mercedes de Mendez y Nuñez, señor, a poor *arriero* on my way to Granada to my wife and family.’

‘Your wife and family are to be pitied,’ said the man, ‘for I fear they are about to lose you. What are you doing here?’

‘Wishing I were somewhere else, by St Jago, gentlemen! But it serves me right for taking a road I did not know. I left Motril, on the coast, this morning, and as I was in a hurry, I thought I would take a short cut

through the Sierra. *Ay de mi!* The shortest cut is always the longest way round!

‘An *arriero*, comrades, do you hear?’ The man with the flower turned to his companions. ‘What shall be done with him?’

‘Are you courageous?’ asked another of the band.

‘Our family have never been cowards, señor,’ replied the Little Bird with mettle.

‘Well, we shall see,’ said the cavalier. ‘Stand still, brave *arriero*, while I shoot at you.’

Following the word with the deed, he pointed his revolver in the direction of El Pajarillo, and fired off all five chambers in quick succession. The Little Bird’s heart came, as they say, into his mouth, and he abandoned himself for lost, as the reports rang out, and the bullets slapped the rock on every side of him. When the firing ceased, and he found himself still alive and apparently unhurt, he was even more surprised than relieved.

‘Why, that’s not so bad!’ laughed the marksman. ‘I have known stiffer-looking fellows than you who would have been jigging finely to that tune.’

‘Gentlemen,’ said the Little Bird earnestly, ‘I beg you to have the courtesy not to kill me.’

‘As to that there is more than one word to be said,’ observed he with the flower. ‘You muleteers are too talkative to be safe.’

‘I assure your worships,’ pleaded El Pajarillo, ‘that if you will be so kind as to permit me to live, my adventure of to-night will remain locked in my heart. To this I pledge my honour.’

The horsemen burst out laughing.

‘The honour of an *arriero*!’ exclaimed one. ‘Are we to hang our lives on the honour of a muleteer?’

‘I have it!’ cried the man who had first seized El Pajarillo. ‘We will give the fellow charge of this cursed Englishman, and he shall take him back for us to Granada, and leave him at the point from which he started.’

‘*Oyé*, Danielo, bravo!’ cried the rest.

‘An Englishman?’ said El Pajarillo, with well-simulated hesitation. ‘I confess I do not like Englishmen. They are the devil to fight, and I have nothing but my knife.’

‘You shall have a pistol,’ said Danielo. ‘Make him ride just in front of you, and at the first attempt he makes to escape, or to remove the bandage from his eyes, you will blow out his brains. But when you come to the road you had better leave him to shift for

himself, lest he should know you again and make trouble.'

'My mule is dead-beat,' the Little Bird objected. 'And I am not much better myself.'

'It is only three leagues to Granada,' said the leader. 'We shall give your mule a good feed of corn, and yourself a good drink of wine, and you will ride like the Cid. As for the Englishman, the more tired he is, the easier he will be to manage.'

'Very well,' said the Little Bird resignedly. 'What must be, must be, señores. I am in your hands.'

No time was lost in carrying out the arrangement. The blindfolded man was led out on his horse by a couple of his captors, and a third man brought a feed of corn for El Pajarillo's mule, which proved quite ready for a second supper. The Little Bird took a pull at the wine they proffered him, and fervently praised its quality.

'You had better be off,' said the man with the flower. 'It will be dark very soon. Follow this gorge till you are across the ridge of the Sierra, and then hold north-westwards as straight as you can make your way. You will come out on the road in an hour's ride. *Vaya con Dios!*'

II.

The Little Bird and his prisoner rode off together up the gorge. 'Pig of an Englishman,' said El Pajarillo in a loud and threatening voice as they drew away, 'if you so much as lift your hand, I will be the death of you!' In a low tone he added, 'Señor Bruce, I beg you to ride quietly till we put a turn of the gorge between us and these gentry. After that we will talk.'

After about a mile, a shoulder of hill shut them off from view of the ruin, and the Little Bird drew bridle. 'Permit me to release you, Señor Bruce,' said he. 'Those villains have made you very uncomfortable.' He whipped out his knife, and in a trice had his companion free. The Scot slid off his horse, and sat down on the ground.

'You will find some food and drink in my saddle-bag, Pajarillo,' said he. 'When I have had something to eat and drink, and got back some feeling in my limbs, we will get on with our business.'

'*Dios!*' commented the old smuggler. 'You are not easily upset, *compañero*. But I would beg you to observe that these fellows are twelve to two, and they are all armed, and

have not so much conscience among them as a flea.'

'On the other hand, they have a hundred gallons at least of petrol and oil which they have brought with them from the city; and Heaven only knows how many hundred more there may be in the secret store which they have been making here in the mountains. That fellow with the flower in his hat, Danielo, is a leading rascal in the service of the German Consulate. It has cost me a fortnight of risky work in Granada to get on the track of this store, Pajarillo *mio*, and we are not going to let it slip through our fingers now. If you have carried out your part of the bargain, it is certain that there is no considerable store at Motril.'

'There is nothing at Motril, señor. The Customs there are afraid of the Government's new regulations. All they can be got to do is to look the other way when the riders bring the stores to the shore at night. I know it from a sure source.'

'Your information coincides with mine, Little Bird. I rode out of Granada this afternoon on the track of these fellows, hoping to run them to earth. But though I kept a long way behind, they were too sharp for me. Soon after we had left the road half-a-dozen

of them jumped on me as I turned a corner, and had me fast before I could put finger to trigger.'

The smuggler nodded. 'That was lucky for you. If you had resisted, they would certainly have killed you. As it was, they probably desired to save themselves the trouble of awkward inquiries, in case you had left word of your destination. It would not suit the German Consulate to have trouble with the Government over a murdered Englishman. We Spaniards are very jealous of our neutrality, Señor Bruce.' Pajarillo winked solemnly. 'To all appearances you are as good a Spaniard as the rest of us, señor, but this Danielo must have got wind of your investigations.'

'No,' said the Scot. 'I am not so clumsy as that, Pajarillo. But unfortunately when the villains seized me they searched me, and by ill-luck I had one of my firm's business-cards upon me, which gave me away.'

'Never mind,' said the older man. 'We shall get even with Danielo yet. What do you propose to do, Señor Bruce?'

'I am going back to where we left them, and I am going to find that store before I leave.'

'In that case I am coming with you,' said the Little Bird. 'For I have no wish to lose

my reward at the hands of your firm. But first, with your permission, I will take the animals farther on, for if they should make a noise here it will be heard. In twenty minutes I shall be back with you, Señor Bruce. By that time your stiffness will have passed off.'

He rode away in the quickly gathering darkness, and the young Scot lit his pipe, and lay smoking, trying to think out a plan of operations. He smoked out his pipe, and El Pajarillo had not returned.

Suddenly his ear caught the sound of hoofs. It was quite dark now save for the faint light of a crescent moon. Bruce crept into the deep shadow of a rock and lay waiting. Up the gorge, in the direction he and his companion had but lately followed, a line of riders came in view. They passed within twenty yards of him, and he recognised the voices of his late captors, in particular the voice of Danielo.

'We will separate after we cross the ridge,' Danielo was saying. 'If any of you see the Englishman or the *arriero* on the way to the city, you should avoid him. Meet me to-morrow by the Alhambra fountain, and I will pay you your money.'

The cavalcade passed on. Bruce counted

them as they passed. The full dozen were there. He waited, but El Pajarillo did not return. Suppose the Catalan should encounter the gang on his way back !

Bruce could do nothing to warn the Little Bird, and with swift decision he realised that he must act for himself, and prosecute his mission alone. He could not afford to risk the possibility that the Little Bird's capture might entail his own. The worst of it was that, having been blindfolded, he did not know exactly what he was to look for. Nevertheless, he must make a beginning, so he set off to walk down the gorge, judging the distance he must go by the pace at which he and the Little Bird had ascended.

Even in the uncertain moonlight Bruce could hardly miss the old ruin on its height. Somewhere here, for a surety, was the secret store, to discover which he was wandering about the Sierra at midnight. But this conclusion carried him very little nearer success, for the ruin was large. With the aid of an electric flash-lamp, of which his late captors had not troubled to deprive him, he peered into this corner and that, under crumbling walls and broken archways, and from time to time descended into subterranean chambers, half-choked with rubble, and sheltering scores

of bats. For all the success that attended his efforts, he might as well have been searching for the crown jewels of King Boabdil. At length he wearily desisted, and began to retrace his steps, intending to pass the rest of the night in the old tower, and continue after sunrise the search for his lost comrade and the hidden stores.

Suddenly a familiar odour caught the Scot's nostrils. He was passing, though he did not know it, the mouth of the cleft in which El Pajarillo had had his adventure with the night-riders. The smell was unmistakable—petrol!

Down the passage went Bruce, following its turnings, till it burrowed under a broken stone doorway into subterranean blackness. The place had a forbidding look, but the smell of spirit was more noticeable than before, and, electric torch in hand, the young man plunged into the gloom. The passage still ran on, continually descending, till Bruce wondered at the system of ventilation which kept the air sweet so far below-ground. At last the floor dropped away before his feet, and flashing his lamp downwards, he beheld a winding stairway descending into the bowels of the earth. Comparing the place with other Moorish ruins of his acquaintance, he decided that this grim

descent was the means by which the old castle, when beleaguered, obtained its water; and, with an involuntary shudder at the fate of the wretched slaves who must have toiled for their Moorish masters to make this deep and hidden stair, the Scot went cautiously down the worn, steep steps. He counted a hundred of them, and then the stairway ended in a rock chamber, half-natural, half-artificially hewn. Here the smell of spirit was all-pervading.

Bruce chuckled. He had found what he sought. All down one side of the chamber were ranged a number of large metal tanks, each with a capacity of several hundred gallons. A few minutes' examination sufficed to show him that nearly all were full.

With pulses beating hard, he stood and considered what to do. To open the tanks was an easy matter, and he had matches with him, but you cannot set fire to a couple of thousand gallons of petrol in a confined space with any degree of personal safety. Donald Bruce, however, was a young man not easily turned aside from his purpose, and he was quite determined that that spirit should be destroyed.

An idea occurred to him. Its execution would be risky, but he must chance it.

With the thriftiness characteristic of his

race, he had put in his pocket the cords from which El Pajarillo had lately released him. He took them out, and found that their total length just sufficed to reach from the nearest tank to the foot of the stone stairs. By tearing his handkerchief and the lining of his coat into narrow strips, he gained another dozen yards. He made a continuous line of the whole, opened the tanks, dipped the line in spirit, and laid the sodden train from the nearest tank to the stairs, and as far up as it would reach. Then, gathering his strength for a sprint up the steps, he applied a match to the end of the train, and, torch in hand, fled for dear life.

He had reached the head of the stairs, and was racing up the underground passage, when the roar of the conflagration shook the earth beneath him, and a rush of hot air swept by him. Half-choked with the reek, and labouring at the ascent, he fled on, thankful for the turns in the passage, till, almost at the end of his endurance, he saw the silvery crescent of the moon, and felt the fresh night-air on his wet face. Staggering, exhausted, haunted with a vision of pursuing flame, Bruce reeled a few yards farther, and flung himself, fainting, into a hollow among the broken masonry of the ruin.

III.

When the Scot came to himself he saw a strange sight. In the space near the opening of the cleft—from which heavy volumes of smoke were still rolling out—the bravos of the German Consulate were gathered on horseback in a circle round one, also on horseback, who sat with his hands fast bound. Beside the bound man was Danielo, the leader, holding a flaming torch, which threw its flickering light on the group. Bruce recognised in the captive his companion adventurer, and saw that the Little Bird's mule, without a rider, was also there. El Pajarillo had a bandage about his head, and Danielo and another member of the group had their arms in slings.

‘You admit,’ Danielo was saying, ‘that you were in league with that spying Englishman to find out the store which has cost so much care and expense to prepare and conceal.’

‘I admit nothing, countryman,’ answered the Little Bird boldly, ‘save that I am very glad to know that the store is destroyed. It is well known to every one of you that our Government has most strictly enjoined that no such stores are to be made, and that the provisioning of submarines is a serious offence against our laws.’

‘Hold your tongue!’ ordered Danielo. ‘We have not brought you here to preach a sermon to us. We are going to finish with you. —What say you, comrades?’

‘Yes, kill him! Kill the spy!’ cried the gang.

‘You hear?’ said Danielo, raising his torch, and looking at the prisoner with an ugly grin. ‘While you live, señor muleteer, not one of us is safe. You must certainly die.’

The old smuggler raised his bandaged head proudly. ‘Kill me, then,’ said he. ‘To every pig his Martinmas. I am not afraid.’

‘If there is any message you wish to send to your family,’ said Danielo, ‘we will find means to let them know that you have met with an accident.’

‘Cowards and murderers!’ exclaimed the captive; ‘I would not trust a message to such trash as you. Do your worst. I defy you! But know that I am no muleteer. Pablo el Pajarillo is my name. You will find it is well known in our Spanish ports. My friends, and the Englishman who knows them, will see that I am avenged!’

At the name of the famous *contrabandista* several members of the rascally group exchanged glances. But Danielo’s smile became more forbidding as he turned away to consult

his companions. Presently he returned to the captive's side.

‘If you are indeed the Little Bird,’ he said, ‘it is the more necessary that you should die. But so that none of us may be accused of your death, we have thought of a plan which will interest you. See, Pajarillo, here is your own mule, and the horse of the Englishman. We will put two nooses about your neck. The end of one we will fasten to your mule, and the end of the other to the horse of your friend. We will then take our leave of you, and heaven in its wisdom shall decide whether the mule or the horse shall have the honour of strangling Señor Pablo el Pajarillo. In any case, the suspicion of your death, if your corpse is discovered, will lie at the door of the Englishman. Do you not think that a famous idea?’ The villain chuckled at his own ingenuity.

‘A very proper scheme for such a set of hired ruffians,’ said the old Catalan stoutly. ‘Who is that behind you?’

The riders started, and turned suddenly in their saddles.

El Pajarillo laughed aloud. ‘Fear not, chicken-hearts!’ he reviled them. ‘There is no one there, unless it be your master, the Devil, watching for your souls.’

Danielo, furious at the trick, struck him in the face. A couple of the riders then dismounted, and under a hail of taunts from the bold old veteran, took him from the horse, tied his feet, and further secured his arms. Then they made a couple of running nooses, and having set them about his neck sufficiently tightly to ensure that, bound as he was, he could not disengage himself, they brought up his mule and Bruce's horse, and made fast the free ends of the cords above the animals' knees.

'*Buenas noches, Señor Pajarillo!*' said Danielo with a mocking bow. 'The Englishman's horse is the fresher, and I should prefer to bet on him, though your mule has a spiteful look. *Adios!*'

The dismounted men sprang to their saddles, and with cruel laughter the whole troop trotted off into the night.

Donald Bruce, his knife open in his hand, had been lying in his shelter waiting for that moment. Ere the last rider had disappeared he crept out, and ran swiftly to the old smuggler, and next moment had cut the perilous cords. Not an instant too soon, for both animals, starting off, as might have been expected, to follow the rest, had already dragged the nooses tight, and the Little Bird was in

the agonies of suffocation. It was some minutes before he could speak ; but when the Scot had freed him, he sat gripping his rescuer's hand in a vice-like clasp.

In a few hurried sentences Bruce made him acquainted with what had occurred since they had parted on the hillside. 'Little Bird, Little Bird,' said he, 'I was afraid you had flown your last flight. But you and I will have more work together yet !'

The Catalan made a wry face. 'To-morrow,' he spluttered, 'we will go to the Alhambra fountain, and see these villains take their pay for to-night's business. It will do us both good.'

GREY FISH.

I.

IT was scorching hot in the pleasant city of Málaga. The Southern sun beat fiercely down upon the whitewashed houses of the port, and from the wide streets of the new town the glare was flung back in the faces of the perspiring few who for their sins had to be abroad in the hour of siesta. True, there was a wind, which flecked with white the blue bay from the point of Los Cantales on the east to the old tower of Pimentel on the west; but it was the *terral*, that rare torment from the north-west which so irritates man and beast that the courts of law account it an extenuating circumstance in cases of crime.

Even in the spacious cellars of M'Ilroy, M'Ilroy, & M'Allister the atmosphere was highly charged with excitability.

Donald Bruce, the firm's confidential clerk, carefully poured wine into a glass on the table before him, and passed it to his companion. 'Little Bird,' said he, 'I think this is the hottest day I have ever known in Málaga.'

The old *contrabandista* nodded, and set the glass to his lips. It was Lagrimas, the

sweetest and most delicious of all the wines of Málaga—the very ‘tears’ or droppings of the ripe grape hung up and dried in the sun, and obtained without pressure—but it did not remove the frown from his brown lined face.

‘Very true, Señor Bruce. Málaga is too hot for me,’ he answered.

The young Scot gave his friend a keen glance. He perceived that when the old Catalan said Málaga was too hot he was not complaining of the *terral*. ‘What’s amiss, Little Bird?’ he inquired.

The Spaniard glanced to right and left, as though he feared lest the rows of casks in these cool vaults might have ears, and lowered his voice. ‘You remember that submarine which we—which met with an accident off Soller two months ago?’

The young man smiled. ‘I have good cause to,’ said he, raising the arm which had been penetrated by a German bullet in the course of that adventure. ‘I wonder how the *Herr Leutnant* and his gang are enjoying their internment in the beautiful Balearics.’

Pajarillo’s frown deepened. ‘As for the gang, I do not know; but as for the lieutenant, he is not enjoying it at all, Señor Bruce, for I met him this morning on the Alameda.’

‘*Dios!* You met him here in Málaga?’

‘Precisely. And what is more, he knew me again. The rascal has escaped. We had some conversation.’

Bruce grinned. ‘I wish I had seen the meeting and heard the conversation.’

‘Oh, as for the conversation, you may hear it now, *señorito mio*. He was sitting outside the Café Colón, reading the *A.B.C.*, when I passed. He got up quietly and came after me—he was, of course, in civilian dress—and he patted me on the shoulder. I turned round and said, “How are you, *señor teniente?*” He gave me a wicked look out of his eyes—he has little savage eyes like a pig, colour of mahogany, and when he is angry it is as if he had sparks in them—and he said, “You cursed hireling, do not think I have forgotten you? One day I hope to have the pleasure of hanging you with my own hands. Germany has her eye on you, you dog!” said he. Oh, he spoke quite gently. The people in the “Colón” might have supposed he was inquiring after my health.’

Bruce sipped his Lagrimas. ‘And what did you say, Pajarillo?’

‘Well, señor, I fear I lost my temper a little bit, though I hope I did not show it. You see, I do not like the Germans. As you

know, they drowned my poor brother Pedro. "You ugly, swaggering devil-fish," I said, "I have my eye on Germany, too. And though it is not a pretty sight," I said, "I find it a profitable pastime." Just then a civil guard came walking down the Alameda. I saw that our *teniente* had noticed him too, so I thought I would treat myself to a little amusement. "And how did you like the climate of Mallorca?" I said. He gave me a frightful scowl, and opened his coat a little way, and I saw an iron cross pinned upon his vest. "That is what I won by escaping," says he; "and if you attempt to speak to this policeman, you dog! I will shoot you where you stand, though I am arrested the next moment." He put his hand in his pocket as he spoke, and, for all I know, he may have had a pistol there. I could have thrown him on the ground, and explained things afterwards to the guard; but, after all, the man has courage, and I did not wish to make a scene, especially as my name is no great recommendation to the police, señor. So, while the guard passed, I stood telling our *teniente* what fine, hospitable people our Mallorquins are, and what a pity it was he had not stayed to enjoy their hospitality a little longer, and what a pleasant time his friends must be having in the island. And

when the danger was past, he cursed me again heartily, and went back to finish his drink, and I went on my way up the Alameda. But now you understand why Málaga is not very healthy for me just now.'

The Scot nodded appreciation of the point. Just then there was a knock at the closed door of the cellar, and an employee of the firm entered. 'A gentleman to see you, Señor Bruce,' said he.

Bruce looked up quickly. 'Has the gentleman an artificial leg?'

'*Si, señor.*'

'And a scar on his face?'

'*Si, señor,* an ugly scar. He speaks no Spanish, and I understood him with difficulty.'

'Bring him down here,' said Bruce.

When the clerk had gone he turned to his companion. 'Pajarillo *mio*, this is very opportune. How would you like a trip to the Canaries? In that case Germany would not have her eye on you for a few weeks; while, on the other hand, you would be able to keep your eye on Germany just as well as in the Mediterranean, and you might be able to put another five thousand pesetas to that bank account which you are accumulating for your family in case anything should happen to you.'

The frown cleared swiftly from the old smuggler's face, and he helped himself to another cigar from a box on the table. 'They say the submarines are playing hell's delight round about the Canaries, señorito,' said he.

'So I have read in the papers,' answered the Scot. 'This gentleman, whom you will see presently, is a very fine fellow. He is a Shetlander. Have you ever heard of the Shetland Islands, Little Bird?'

'They are half-way to the North Pole, are they not?'

'Well, they lie in that direction,' smiled Bruce. 'Cold and rocky, bare and stormy, they are. Br-r-r! But the men that live there, Pajarillo, are among the finest sailors God ever made. This one, whom you can hear hobbling downstairs, was the captain of a trawler—one of those splendid fellows who have been helping our navy to sweep the seas clean for honest folk to trade in ever since this bad business began. Owing to a misunderstanding with a mine'——

At this moment the cellar door opened again, and the young Scot, springing from his seat, ran to greet the new-comer, shook him warmly by the hand, and led him to the table. 'I told them to bring you straight down here,

captain,' he said. 'It's cool, and we can talk quietly. Let me introduce my friend: Captain Angus—Señor Pablo Pajarillo. What do you take, captain?'

With a curt nod to the Spaniard, the Shetlander limped to the proffered seat—a broad-shouldered, weather-tanned seaman, whose honest, bearded face was marred by a grim scar on one side reaching from temple to chin. When he spoke, his Northern speech might have puzzled an Englishman. 'There's no Boar-rd o' Control in these latitudes,' said he, 'so gin ye hae sic a thing, I'll be takin' a wee drap whusky.'

Bruce fetched it, and rejoined them at the table. 'It's odd you should have called just at this moment, captain,' said he, 'for I think I have found you a mate for the *Marta*. In fact, I was just broaching the subject to Pajarillo here when you came.'

'Does Mr Pach—Packa—I canna juist get ma tongue roond yon name, Mr Bruce. Does the gentleman speak English?'

'Not a word.'

'That'll be a deeficulty.'

'We'll get over that,' said Bruce. 'You'll have me, you know, to interpret. You will do the navigating, and Pajarillo, who is a capital sailor, will run the crew. I'll just put

it to him and make sure.' He dropped into Spanish. 'Little Bird, Captain Angus here has been honourably discharged from the British service on account of his injuries. But he's not the man to settle down on a pension while his country is fighting for life. So he has entered into certain arrangements with the firm—I need not go into them, you can guess. The long and short of it is that there's a schooner, the *Marta*, lying at the Herodia Mole, and Captain Angus is going to take her out with a trading cargo to Tenerife, and she needs a mate. She will be some weeks in the Canaries, and if an opportunity should arise for the mate to increase his pay in the manner you know of, you may rest assured that Captain Angus will put no difficulties in the way. What do you say?'

The Catalan looked from one to the other of his companions. 'Are you also going, Señor Bruce?' he asked.

Donald laughed gaily. 'You know very well, Little Bird, that whenever there is a probability of the firm having to pay out sums of five thousand pesetas, I always endeavour to be present in order to check the account-keeping.'

'If you are going, I will go,' said Pajarillo.

Bruce turned to the Shetlander. 'He'll go,' he said. 'His brother was blown up on a torpedoed ship. You know these Southern vendettas, captain. We'll drink to a successful voyage!'

'Ay, we wull that,' said Angus. 'And I'll gie the toast, an' it'll be the New Year toast o' the Shetlands. Ye ken, we keep the auld calendar, sir, an' it's a gr-rand time up in Lerwick on the New Year's Eve. I'll gie ye the toast they aye drink, an' here it is: "Health tae man, an' death tae the grey fish!" We're whalin'-men, ye ken, up yonder, an' we a' ken what that means. But there's ither grey fish in the seas the day, so I gie ye the auld Shetland toast to drink it wi' a guid hairt the noo!'

Bruce interpreted, and Captain Angus, watching narrowly, saw the dark eyes of his new mate light up; a strong brown hand shot out and gripped his own. Then the three men's glasses clinked together, and the *Marta's* crew was complete.

II.

A week later the *Marta* sailed from the Herodia Mole. She was not a very smart-looking craft. The rust was on her plates, and her paint—what remained of it—was

streaked and blistered. Her sails were patched and parti-coloured, and she had a general air of rakishness. Captain Angus, however, had satisfied himself that her standing gear was good, and that she was reasonably seaworthy. 'We'll tidy the lass up as we gang alang,' he said; 'and gin she behaves hersel', we'll gie her a new dress while we lie in Santa Cruz—that's to say, gin we get there!' he added with native caution.

So, on a sunny morning, when half-a-dozen Allied destroyers were manœuvring outside the bay, the *Marta* slipped away from Málaga and the mountains of Spain, and with the yellow-red flag of Spain at her mast-head made for the Strait and the Western Ocean. Several times before she cleared Europa Point she had to lay to and answer polite inquiries. Once a British sub-lieutenant came aboard—a bright-faced, blue-eyed boy, who gave the *Marta's* skipper a tremendous hand-grip as he returned to his launch; and once a Breton sea-rover, who remembered meeting Captain Angus years before, up in the Iceland seas, and in a queer mixture of gesture and broken English warned him that the U-boats were busy levying toll off Funchal. At last the *Marta* got through the Strait and felt the ocean rollers.

‘I’m thinkin’, Mr Bruce,’ said Angus, ‘we’ll gie Funchal the go-by. They tell me the cabs doon yonder are drawn by oxen instead o’ horses, an’ gang on runners instead o’ wheels, and I’d like fine to tell ma wife I had r-ridden in ane, but I dinna think ’twould be prudent. We’re sailin’ under the Spanish flag, an’ tradin’ between neutral ports, an’ we hae nae women nor bairns aboard to tempt the Germans to murder, but we’re owned by a British firm, an’ we canna get awa frae that. Sae we’ll juist keep oorsel’s tae oorsel’s till we raise the Peak.’

So the *Marta*, crossing the ocean highway from the Cape, stood out into the blue Atlantic before she turned her long bowsprit southward. She made good weather of it for some days, and not a periscope did she see all the way to Madeira, which she left a faint blur on her eastern horizon.

And then, half-way from Madeira to the Canaries, her luck ran out. She struck a region of unexpected calms. For seven whole days she drifted helplessly between the nether and the upper blue, sweltering under the tropical sunshine, heaving and dipping with flapping canvas to the slow, almost imperceptible roll of the vast Atlantic. She made not ten leagues in the seven days, and Captain

Angus began to look grave when he inspected the water-tanks.

Early one morning the two Scotsmen and Pajarillo were on the poop together. Angus was smoking silently beside the useless wheel. The sun had risen half-an-hour before, but the air was motionless and opaque with a white sea-fog. The Little Bird was leaning over the rail, staring with a frown into the grey obscurity. Bruce, with the restless vigour of youth, was engaged with a hatchet chopping up a chunk of driftwood they had picked up overnight—to keep himself fit, he said.

‘Mr Bruce,’ said Angus, ‘if I were mair at hame in these latitudes I wud feel mair comfortable. Wull ye ask the mate hoo lang this is like tae last?’

Bruce interpreted the question.

The old Catalan shrugged his great shoulders. ‘Perhaps a day, perhaps a week. *Quien sabe?*’

‘We’ll hae to gang on half-water rations, gin something different disna happen the day,’ said Angus.

The words were hardly out of his mouth when something different did happen, with that disconcerting suddenness characteristic of maritime affairs.

Immediately below the eyes of the Little Bird, as he leaned indolently gazing, the oily

surface of the ocean underwent a rapid change. It broke, and a dripping grey mass heaved itself into sight. At first the vast bulk remained half-awash, but two peculiar uprights a score of paces apart left no doubt as to its character.

The Catalan leaped back from the rail like a man electrified. '*Dios!* A submarine!' he shouted.

Donald Bruce dropped his hatchet and ran to the side. The Shetlander grabbed the wheel to save himself from falling, as the schooner felt the impact of the rising submarine, and roared in stentorian tones, 'All hands on deck!' Bruce repeated the shout in Spanish for the crew, and then turned sharp round at the sound of a fierce yell behind him.

El Pajarillo seemed suddenly to have run amok. He had snatched up the hatchet which the Scot had let fall on deck, and Bruce was just in time to see him standing outside the schooner's rail, poised for a spring. Next moment he had gone overboard.

Clinging to the rail, Bruce saw the Little Bird, axe still in hand, stumble to his feet on the glistening, wet, empty deck of the submarine. Then he ran forward, and with a terrific blow smashed in the eye-piece of the

periscope nearest him. Without pausing a moment, Pajarillo again uttered his wild shout, and rushed at the second periscope, which he served likewise.

The *Marta's* crew by now were running up on deck, and Angus, his bearded face alight with excitement, was holding the rail beside his younger countryman.

'By the pooers, he's blinded her!' he exclaimed. 'We'll hae the muckle deil to pey the noo!'

And yet for a moment nothing else happened. The Little Bird, hatchet in hand, stood on the slippery steel deck beside the second periscope like a man dazed at his own achievement. The U-boat, seemingly, was every bit as much taken by surprise as the *Marta* herself, and stunned by the unexpected blindness which had overtaken her. For a full minute she gave no sign of life. Then the door of her conning-tower slid open, and an officer stepped out on deck. At the vision of the schooner rocking on the sea almost within arm's reach he stood and stared in amazement.

He had not perceived the Little Bird, to whom his back was half-turned. But Pajarillo had seen him, and the sight galvanised him into renewed activity. Without a word, he

hurled himself on the German from behind, lifted him off his feet like a child, and, running along the deck, flung him bodily into the sea just under the *Marta's* counter. Next moment he had dived in after him, and before the submarine commander had choked up the salt water he had swallowed, the Spaniard had him pinned by both elbows from behind, and was treading water, holding up his enemy.

‘Guid mon! Oh, canny! canny!’ cried Angus ecstatically. He thrust a repeating-pistol into Bruce’s hand. ‘Cover yon connin’-tooer hatch, ma lad, and gin ye can talk a few wor-rds o’ Hun, tell the Jonah-men to keep below, or their skipper’s a deid mon.’

Thus ordering, Angus snatched up a coil of line, bent it with swift, skilful fingers to a life-belt, and flung the belt within a couple of yards of the men in the water.

The Catalan turned at the splash, and grinning with instant comprehension, began to work himself and his captive towards the floating ring.

The Shetland captain looked round for his men. ‘Tally on the line, there, ye gawkin’ fules!’ he shouted; and if his words were obscure to the Andalusian crew, his actions made them clear. They seized the end of the line and waited.

Several of the submarine's crew had come on deck by now, but the warning shout of Bruce, the sight of his levelled weapon, and possibly most of all the amazing spectacle of their commander's plight, held them motionless.

The Little Bird reached the lifebelt. With a quick movement he let go the German with his right arm, hooked it through the belt, and resumed his grip before the half-drowned officer could turn. Out of the corner of his eye Bruce saw what was happening. 'Little Bird,' he cried, 'can you take the weight of you both on the one arm?'

'*Cierto!* Pull us up!' came the confident answer.

'Haul away, captain. He'll stick it!' said Bruce.

The lifebelt and its dripping double burden swung out of the water, and a minute later the old smuggler and his catch were safely aboard. In another minute the German, his arms fast bound to his sides by the life-line, was brought alongside the young Scot.

'Mr Bruce,' said Angus, with a beaming smile, 'wull ye tell yon square-heids that gin they mak' ony kind o' trouble we're gaein' to blaw the brains oot o' their skipper's heid, but that gin they keep quiet we'll tak' guid care

o' him, an' deliver him back, cairriage free, inside the three-mile leemit at Santa Cruz ?'

In the best German at his command—which was not very good—Bruce passed on this intimation.

The men on the submarine looked up doubtfully at their captive chief. The latter turned to Bruce. 'You are English, are you not?' he asked in faultless English.

'I speak English better than German,' the Scot admitted guardedly.

'Bah! You are English. Otherwise, why this outrage committed under a neutral flag upon a German officer?'

'My good sir,' said Bruce, 'when one has the misfortune to bump into a mad dog, one does the first thing one thinks of. Luckily for us, our friend here had the presence of mind to think of the right thing.'

'Bah!' spluttered the angry German. 'Why should we harm an old tub like yours, sailing under the Spanish flag?'

Captain Angus chipped in. 'See here, ma fine mon, we dinna want to stand here haverin' wi' you. The question before the meetin' is: Wull we kill each ither a' roon', or wull ye gang alang quietly wi' us tae Santa Cruz?'

The German frowned in bewilderment at the broad Scots speech. 'I am not sure that

I understand you, captain,' said he. 'If I give you my word of honour not to try to escape, will you remove this cord, which is not suitable for an officer and a gentleman?'

'Mon, that's juist what I wull not dae,' said Angus. 'A rope is a verra proper thing for a murderin' pirate like yersel', an' gin 'twere roon' yer neck, 'twould be in a properer place still. Either ye mun gang tae Santa Cruz wi' yer hands tied, or tae Davy Jones wi' yer heid split. Which wull it be?'

The German, dark with wrath, turned to the younger Scot. 'You seem to be a person of intelligence,' he said. 'This ship of yours may be a week making the Canaries in the present calms. Do you expect my ship to lie about all that time, waiting till a British warship comes along to sink her?'

'If you decide in favour of saving your life,' said Bruce, 'and your ship is pressed for time, I suggest that you give us a tow to Tenerife. Your fellows can easily cast off and submerge if we meet anything you are afraid of. But understand this: there must be no torpedo practice while you are aboard here.—Is that right, Captain Angus?'

'Pairfectly richt, and a verra guid notion, too, Mr Bruce.'

'And what security have I,' asked the Ger-

man arrogantly, 'that you will carry out your part of the bargain, and put me back on my ship at the Canaries?'

'The security o' a guid Scots promise, ma fine mon; an' deil a better security wull ye find in the haill o' Kaiserland.'

'I accept your terms, and one day I will repay your insults,' said the captive. 'I am of more value to my Kaiser than many wretched tubs like yours. But be warned, if you play me false, we will blow your schooner out of the water, and every man of you shall drown.'

'Ye needna swank,' said Angus. 'Bid yer Jonah-men get oot a hawser. An' tell them that ilka eicht bells till we mak' port they can refresh themsel's gazin' at ye for twa meenits up on the fo'c'sle-heid, to mak' sure we havena lost ye.'

III.

Thus it came about that for the first time in his life a very irate submarine commander made a voyage in a Spanish tramp schooner, and every four hours, as Angus had promised, was paraded on deck for the inspection of his compatriots. It was the Little Bird to whom it generally fell to take charge of the hostage on these occasions, and Pajarillo performed

the ceremony with great gusto. He would compliment the German on the power of his ship's engines as she towed the schooner along, and on the skill with which his crew had so quickly repaired the damaged periscopes, and would express compassion for them in the narrow quarters to which their occupation condemned them.

‘It seems, *señor teniente*,’ the Catalan gravely observed, ‘that you and I are fated to be thrown together. Who would have thought, when we parted on the Alameda back there in Málaga, that we should so soon be shipmates? Life is strange, *señor teniente*. It will be sad when you have to leave us.’

‘Be assured, we shall meet again!’ the German answered in his harsh Spanish. ‘And when we do, my friend—*Ach, lieber Gott*, when we do!’ His glare of suppressed ferocity filled in the rest.

But the smuggler merely smiled, and shrugged his broad shoulders, as he quoted his country's proverb: ‘“To every pig his Martinmas,” *señor teniente*! Who knows the hour of his death? You and I have so much to say to each other that only a tongue of steel can say it.’

It was on a fine, breezy morning that the *Marta* descried the Peak of Tenerife, poised

far away above its cushion of cloud, like an island in the sky. Up to now they had hardly sighted a vessel, but as they neared the island a distant streak of smoke made the U-boat nervous. She submerged, leaving the *Marta* to sail on for port.

They were well within the three-mile limit, and rapidly nearing the harbour, when for the last time the submarine commander was led on deck by the Little Bird to be exhibited to his crew, whose periscope, an evil black speck, was visible a few cables' length astern in the schooner's wake.

'The question of how best to restore you to your friends, *señor teniente*,' said the Little Bird gravely, 'is one that has given us anxious thought. We might land you, and let them come into port for you, but our captain feels that would be taking an unfair advantage of you. The British, as you know, have these ridiculous notions of what they call sport. We might lay to, and let you go aboard; but there are two difficulties: for one thing, we do not wish to be suspected of having anything to do with such people as you; for another thing, when you found yourself safe back aboard, some careless fellow on your ship might accidentally let slip a torpedo in our direction.'

‘You have my word of honour,’ said the German haughtily.

‘Very true,’ the Little Bird agreed. ‘But unfortunately, *señor teniente*, we cannot persuade our captain to place any reliance on that security. In fact, he suggests that as you came to us through the water, it would be best for you to return in like manner.’

‘I do not understand,’ said the German.

‘It is quite simple,’ said Pajarillo politely. ‘We propose to give you a lifebelt, and to lower you over the side. Before this is done, yonder periscope must drop astern at least a mile; that will give us the opportunity to get into harbour while your friends are picking you up. The moment you are overboard we will intimate the fact to your friends by yawing off our course to starboard. You may signal these instructions to your vessel. Do I make myself clear, *señor teniente*?’

The German at first stared with angry incredulity; but when it dawned upon him that the proposal was seriously made, his fury vented itself in a torrent of abuse. Captain Angus and Bruce, standing beside the Little Bird, listened stolidly to his flow of malediction. Finding it without effect, the German stopped at last, and looked from one to

another of the three men. 'I protest!' said he. 'In the name of civilisation, I protest against such barbarity. These waters are infested with sharks. I may be devoured alive while my ship is coming to my assistance.'

'The sea is as God made it,' answered Pajarillo grimly. 'A shark, señor, is no more dangerous to a man with a lifebelt than are cold and storm to a shipwrecked crew left hundreds of miles from land—such a spectacle as you, *señor teniente*, have often assisted at. Moreover, the shark is a wise beast. What shark, recognising the uniform of a German submarine officer, would bite the hand which feeds him?'

The German, however, did not share this optimistic view, and when (after being fluently and comprehensively cursed) the *Marta's* men lowered him into the Atlantic waves, he commenced kicking and splashing the moment he touched the water. And the last sight they had of him as they ran into Santa Cruz, just before the U-boat emerged on the surface beside him, he was kicking still.

'What I should like to know, Pajarillo,' said Bruce as he and Captain Angus sat with the old smuggler that evening in a café on the Plaza Mayor, 'is this: whatever put it into your head, when that fellow's ship bobbed

up alongside of us, to act as you did? You certainly saved our lives.'

The big Catalan took a long, thoughtful pull at his *puro* before he answered. 'Señor Bruce,' said he confidentially, 'you have known me for a long time, and you will not accuse me of being a coward. So to you I am not afraid to confess what I would not say to every man. Well, then, it was simply that I was frightened. When that ugly grey thing bumped up out of the sea against our schooner, I was seized with panic, and for the moment I did not know what I was doing. And afterwards, when I was on the submarine, and that man came out of the conning-tower, and I saw it was the very same whom I had met on the Alameda, I was (if possible) more frightened still, for then I knew we had no chance whatever if he saw my face. So I just ran at him as a wild bull rushes in the ring, and threw him into the sea; though what I was going to do next I knew no more than Adam. It was our brave captain who had the wit to turn my madness to good account. I drink to our captain, Señor Bruce. As for me, I was merely frightened.' He raised his glass, and bowed with a princely air to the sturdy Shetlander, who sat vainly trying to follow their conversation.

Bruce translated the compliment, and the islander's ruddy face went redder than ever.

‘Hoots, Mr Bruce, sir! Tell him he’s a gentleman. And tell him, gin ye wull, that the next time I am in a ticht cor-rner I hope I’ll hae a mate beside me juist as frichtened as himsel’.

THE SHARK'S CAGE.

I.

‘**Y**OU see the idea?’ said Donald Bruce.

‘Top-hole,’ answered the lieutenant-commander. He was a very young lieutenant-commander, and his eyes sparkled with an almost boyish eagerness. ‘It would be a great scoop,’ he said. ‘The only thing that bothers me is that we have to be so careful not to tread on the toes of those confounded neutrals. The Canaries, of course, are Spanish territory.’

‘The Spaniards,’ said Bruce severely, ‘should protect their neutrality from abuse.’

‘I know. All the same, if there were to be any kind of a misfire, and this beastly Boche once got his U-boat clear of this “Cage” of yours, Mr Bruce, he would send in a complaint to his embassy at Madrid, and the Spanish Government would raise Cain. I wish I knew what the international law of the matter is. You see, I stand to get into a deadly row if I’m wrong.’

The Scotsman nodded his appreciation. ‘The whole point of my scheme is,’ he patiently explained, ‘that we don’t aim at

fighting at all. We merely seek to kidnap the whole caboodle—ship, men, and everything. Kidnapping is a mere civilian offence, which anybody is entitled to commit at his own risk. On the other hand, these miserable Huns are systematically infringing Spanish neutrality by using this spot as their base. All we do is to slip into La Jaula before them, lie doggo till the right moment, and then corral the lot and cart them away to some comfortable internment camp. Why, they ought to be grateful to us for saving their lives!’

‘It would be a great scoop,’ the lieutenant-commander repeated dreamily.

“‘Nothing venture, nothing win,’” quoted Bruce.

The young officer gazed thoughtfully at the two men before him. Both of them—the grey-eyed, alert Scot, and his silent, big Catalan companion—wore the dress of Spanish peasants. Inured as he had become to queer doings since he had taken his first submarine out of Spithead a couple of years before, the proposition which these two men had come out from Tenerife in a fishing-boat to lay before him was as fanciful an adventure as even the lieutenant-commander could have desired. Boyish as he seemed, however, he

was a pretty shrewd judge of character, and he made up his mind quickly.

‘I’ll do it, Mr Bruce,’ he said quietly. ‘By gad, I wish I could talk to your silent friend here in his own lingo! Do you say you have actually got these fifty Spanish peasant suits in your boat right here?’

‘Right here, sir,’ said Bruce.

‘Well, that’s that,’ said the lieutenant-commander. He got out a box of cigarettes and passed them. ‘Before we tranship them, if you won’t think it impertinent, I should like to hear how you got on the track of this business.’

The Scot slowly inhaled a mouthful of cigarette-smoke and slowly blew it out again before replying. ‘A couple of days after we landed at Santa Cruz, my friend the Little Bird ran up against an old acquaintance of his in a café. This old acquaintance had had to clear out of Spain some years ago owing to a difference with the Customs on the tariff question; and after drifting about Cuba for a few years, he had settled down here in the Canaries, where, I gather, he is doing pretty well. Of course, like everybody else, they talked about the submarine campaign. The Little Bird’s friend wasn’t very pleased with the Huns, it seems, because he has a biggish

interest in the banana trade, which is all anyhow on account of the pirates; but, on the other hand, he mentioned that he was making up his losses to some extent by helping to supply the brutes with necessaries at one of their rendezvous. Well, the Little Bird is pretty slim—don't let him think I am talking about him—and after they had had a few drinks together, he seems to have got his old friend to take him on as a kind of agent to convey the stuff to this place which they call the Cage—La Jaula in the Spanish. You see, the Government regulations about neutrality make it a difficult thing to engage in that sort of trade, and the Cage is a nasty place to get at, and the Little Bird had a pretty good record as a daring smuggler at home in the old days; so I suppose his acquaintance thought he would be a handy kind of man for the job. Anyway, he took him on, and Pajarillo got through with a big consignment of stuff in A1 style, and his friend was delighted. The Little Bird did not forget his vendetta against his brother's murderers, however, and had a good look round while he was there. A few days later he took me up with him alone on the q.t., and we made a further and more detailed inspection of the *locus in quo*, as the lawyers say. And now Pajarillo's

friend has booked him to take charge of the next lot of mules going up with the stuff on Sunday night for loading into the U-boat on the Monday. He will take his own crowd with him—half-a-dozen fellows from our boat, the *Marta*, who can be relied on to obey orders. They will deal with the two men in charge of the store and the tackle on the cliff-top. The rest we do for ourselves.'

'Won't it be just a wee bit rough on your friend's pal in Santa Cruz?' asked the lieutenant-commander, with a true British sense of fair-play.

The Scot smiled. 'M'Ilroy, M'Ilroy, and M'Allister, my employers, will see that the gentleman is not out of pocket on the transaction,' he said.

'Top-hole!' exclaimed the young officer. He patted the great Catalan on the shoulder. 'Mr Bruce, tell him he's a brick,' he requested.

Bruce interpreted, and the brown, lined face relaxed into a grave smile. El Pajarillo removed his cigarette with his left hand and held out his right. '*Camarada!*' he said.

'True for you, old son!' replied the lieutenant-commander. 'We'll give 'em *Kamerad*, if we have any luck. Now, let's get those fancy dresses of yours aboard, Mr Bruce, and then your friend can go back with his boat

and carry on. You are sure you can point me out the way into this Cage place from the sea ?’

‘I took my bearings very carefully when I was there,’ answered the Scot; ‘and though I have never had the honour of piloting a submarine before, I have knocked about a good deal with ships of one sort or another. I think I can promise you.’

II.

A couple of afternoons later Donald Bruce was enjoying the novel, and to him weird, experience of standing with the lieutenant-commander at the periscope of the submarine as it pursued its way beneath the waters of the Atlantic along the rock-bound coast of Tenerife. The sensation reminded him of a long-ago day in his childhood, when, with a crowd of summer visitors, he had walked round the table of a camera-obscura on a seaside pier at home, watching from the darkness of the tiny room the crowd of trippers and the bathing-machines on the distant beach. Only, the camera-obscura did not sway up and down with the rather sickly alternations which the Atlantic Ocean imparted to the submarine ship. He wiped the perspiration from his forehead, and wished the trip was over.

‘There’s La Jaula!’ he suddenly exclaimed.

The shore, perhaps two miles to starboard of them, was a line of high cliff, parched and gray-brown in the hot sun. At a point which they were nearing there was a black slit in the line of sunlit cliff, where some ancient cataclysm of this volcanic land had rent the rocky mass. The slit went only part way up the cliff, and, seen from seaward at this distance, had the appearance of a mere triangular crack in the face of the rock wall—a crack perhaps ten feet wide at its base, extending some fifty feet up the cliffside.

‘Man alive,’ exclaimed the lieutenant-commander, ‘you don’t suppose I am going to put my ship at that crack! The camel that tried to get through the needle’s eye had a cushy job compared with that! What?’

‘Wait and see,’ Bruce answered. ‘The tide is high at present. When the tide is low, the fall of even a few feet that the ocean tides give you here will make all the difference. You will see that the opening broadens very much at the base. You will then be able to run right up to the cliff, dive as you enter the cleft, run along under water for a hundred yards or so at a depth of from twenty to thirty feet, and then poke your periscope up again. You will find yourself in the Cage.’

‘I say, Bruce,’ said the young officer gravely, ‘you know what would happen if this little ship of mine hit those rocks in the tunnel?’

Bruce nodded. ‘I know. But you won’t hit them. If it were a man swimming, he could swim right in without diving.’

‘How do you know?’

‘Because I have done it, sir,’ said Bruce. ‘The Little Bird and I swam it together, and tested the depth by diving.’

The officer stared at him. ‘The devil you did!’ he exclaimed. ‘Well, you’re a cool hand, anyway. All the same, it’s a deuced rum place.’

‘Inside,’ the Scot continued, ‘it is a great irregular crater, acres of still, dark water, with precipices dropping down to it as steep as the side of a house, on every quarter but one, and there is our ravine. My theory is that in one of the prehistoric eruptions of these islands, there actually was a crater which burst open here partly under water, and that the seawater, getting down to the underground fires, went off in steam and blew crevices like this on all sides. However, I’m no geologist.’

‘No,’ the lieutenant-commander agreed. ‘But for a wine-merchant’s clerk, old son, you have some pretty serviceable gifts. I

think we'll lie off here till sundown, and then butt in and try our luck in the Cage.'

At dusk, when the submarine, all but her periscope submerged, again approached the cliff, there was a noticeable change. The narrow slit had broadened out at the base till it resembled the mouth of a vast culvert debouching into the sea. On the water-level it was nearly a hundred yards across. Inside, it was black as the pit.

'By gum!' said the lieutenant-commander as he stood at his eye-piece; 'it's a shuddery place, Mr Bruce! I bet that Boche skipper's heart was in his sea-boots the first time he went in there! I know mine is. Well, we're in for it now. Here goes!'

He gave the order to submerge still deeper, and had any man been there to witness, he would have seen the periscope disappear in the swirling water at the foot of the cliff. Sunk deep under, the lieutenant-commander stood in the body of his little craft, and by the light of the electric lamps watched the seconds-hand of his chronometer, with a tense, pale face. At last his hand moved to a lever. The vessel's way was checked. She rose a little, and presently at the eye-piece of the periscope a dim, uncertain picture showed itself.

Bruce heaved an involuntary sigh of relief. 'You must come to the surface now,' said he. 'If the Little Bird has done his part, we have no observers to fear.'

A couple of minutes later they emerged from the conning-tower on to the wet deck, and looked about them.

The submarine was afloat in the midst of a deep, gloomy lake, ringed round with beetling cliffs, in whose cracked and riven sides cavernous black openings showed here and there—mysterious witnesses to the terrific force of that long-ago explosion which had rent the island shore. Only at one point in the irregular circuit of the dark lake was there a tiny strip of beach, formed of broken volcanic fragments. This beach was steep-to, the water deepening immediately; but against the rocky wall behind the beach was a simple arrangement of tackle, by means of which a gangway could be raised, or lowered, to extend a few feet out over the water. At the present moment this gangway was down and in the dim light, standing at the end of it with a hand on one of the guide-ropes, was the tall figure of El Pajarillo, smoking a cigarette with philosophic calm.

The lieutenant-commander rubbed his hands with satisfaction. 'Mr Bruce, that partner of

yours is a daisy. I take off my hat to him,' he said.

The Scot glanced up the face of the cliff above the gangway tackle. 'Yes, it's all right,' said he; 'there's the signal—the Spanish flag hung out instead of the Hun.'

Three hundred feet up the dark rock, a bit of bunting, striped with yellow and red, hung against the fading daylight.

'The store-hut is just there,' said Bruce, 'and there is a tackle at the top to lower the stuff by. It doesn't look far, but it's the better part of half-a-mile to get there. I will show you where to take your ship so that she won't be seen, and then we'll come back and get to work.'

The submarine went ahead slowly towards the landward borders of the Cage, passing round an angle of rock which completely hid her from the entrance and the landing-stage. She came to one of the fissures in the cliffside, large enough to take her in complete concealment, even on the surface of the water. 'How will this do?' Bruce asked.

'Top-hole!' answered the officer. 'I'll send my second round here with her when we have gone ashore. Now for the beach, and those fancy-dress costumes of yours!'

With twenty men of the submarine's crew,

garbed, like themselves, as Spanish peasants, and wearing the silent *alpargatas*, or rope sandals, on their feet, they landed. El Pajarillo saluted gravely as they came up the gangway. 'All is secure above, Señor Bruce,' he reported. 'I delivered my stores into the hut, and sent away all those with me who were not members of the *Marta's* crew. Then we surprised the German agent and the two men with him. I have put them in a safe place under guard. The German submarine will come in on to-morrow morning's ebb. We have plenty of time to get ready. You have the gear ready for loosening the bridge?'

'We have everything, Little Bird,' Bruce answered. 'And if all goes as it should, I shall take the responsibility of advising my firm to add 50 per cent. to your fee for this adventure.'

The old smuggler bowed with a regal air. 'I shall do my best to deserve your consideration, señor.'

Led by Bruce and the Spaniard, the party made their way up a steep, winding track, which rose gradually, with varying gradient, towards the cliff-top. They walked in single file, for the track, though bordered in places with thick subtropical shrubs, admitted of no more. Again and again it curved so sharply

on itself round an angle of rock that an unguided stranger in the swiftly gathering darkness must inevitably have walked over the edge of the precipice which fell away on the outer side. The sailors, habituated to the confined space of the submarine, breathed heavily as they breasted the steep ascent.

When they had covered something over a quarter of a mile along the sharp zigzags of the cliff path, they came to a point where the narrow track, clinging to the side of the cliff, made a series of angles like an irregular letter M. At the central point of the M a narrow bridge, formed of a couple of planks laid together and secured by ropes to uprights on either side, spanned a cavernous crack of some seven feet wide, which dropped sheer for fifty or sixty feet. Here Bruce halted, and turned to the lieutenant-commander, who walked immediately in his rear.

‘This is the crux of the whole scheme,’ said he. ‘As soon as Mr Hun arrives in the morning, he will send up his working-party of a dozen to twenty men to load up the stuff from the hut. In all probability the skipper will go with them himself to superintend the proceedings. There is just about enough room in these shrubs to hide a couple of your most reliable men. As soon as the Boche

party have crossed the bridge and got out of sight, these men must pitch this bridge down into the cañon. Then the Little Bird, who is known to the Huns from having been here before with a consignment of stuff, will go down to the German boat, say there has been an accident to the bridge, and ask them to send up every man they can spare with fresh planks to make a new bridge. That will pretty well clear out their ship. As soon as the second party have got well away, your fellows ambushed in the rocks by the landing-stage will sound a bugle, and rush the German ship. At the same signal your ship will sail round the bend and show the Germans the game is up. If the second German party attempt to return down the path, they will be held up there by the half-dozen fellows you will have hidden for the purpose. And, as you see, on a path like this a couple of men with rifles could hold up any number. As for the first lot, we shall look after them up above. You see, they won't be able to recross the gap with the bridge gone. There is a very steep bit just at the top as you come out to the store-hut. With a few men up there we shall be able to truss them up one after the other as they climb to the level, and we shall have half of them captured before they

find there is anything amiss. They will have to come up sooner or later, and we can afford to wait for them if necessary. The great thing is to keep our men well hidden till the right moment. If we do that, we ought to bag the whole hornet's nest without so much as a sting.'

'They might shoot your friend, the Little Bird,' observed the lieutenant-commander.

'They might; but I don't think they will,' said Bruce. 'Pajarillo is pretty well used to looking after himself, and he knows what he is up against.'

'We'll see it through, anyhow,' said the other. 'If these Canary folk can't protect their own neutrality, we must help them.'

It was now a darkish night, with only a crescent of moon showing. El Pajarillo, however, had already gone carefully over the ground, and with the aid of flash-torches the lieutenant-commander placed his men in the several ambushes selected. He himself decided to lead the beach-party to the attack of the U-boat.

A couple of hours before daybreak a rehearsal of the programme was performed by all hands, the Germans being personated by the remaining members of the submarine's crew. It went off without a hitch. An hour

later the lieutenant-commander, with Bruce, made a final tour of inspection to see that all were in their places. The submarine was sent away to her hiding-place ; and then, while the tropical day grew quickly out of the sea, the grey-black cliffs of the Cage waited in silence, with no sign of the watching eyes and listening ears which peopled their grim solitudes. Over the oil-still green water in the Cage itself the German flag once more hung limply from the store-shed on the height, to allay suspicion. There was nothing to disturb the confidence of the most cautious U-boat skipper who ever sneaked into a secret lair.

III.

Hark ! Just as the shining of the upper sky bore witness to the coming of the sun, the rocky walls of the Cage sent up a warning sound—the swishing, slapping noise caused by the wash of a large vessel. The Little Bird, who was posted at a spot whence he could just see the landing-stage—which he had placed in position—saw from his hiding-place the long, grey bulk of the U-boat glide up to the stage and stop. An officer on deck stepped on to the gangway and looked about him, as if expecting some one to greet him. Seeing no one, he glanced upward to where

the German flag hung immediately overhead. The sight apparently reassured him, for he gave an order, and from the deck of the vessel, where they were clustered, the U-boat's crew followed him ashore, each man carrying a rifle. El Pajarillo counted a score of men who landed. Led by the officer, they began the ascent of the winding path. They passed him safely, and a little later he heard the crash of the plank bridge falling into the chasm, and a confused shouting which followed.

In accordance with his instructions, the Little Bird promptly left the shelter of his bush and hastened down the path to the landing-stage. The sound of the crash and the shouting had reached those on board the U-boat, and the Little Bird's brown, lined face assumed an expression of great concern as he approached. A junior officer, pistol in hand, awaited him at the end of the gangway. '*Gott im Himmel!* What is the matter, you Spanish trickster?' he demanded fiercely.

El Pajarillo spread out his horny hands and shrugged his big shoulders. '*Señor teniente*, there has been an unfortunate accident. The supports of the bridge across the gap have given way, and the bridge has gone to the bottom of the gap. By the mercy of God, all your men are safely across, and I myself

contrived to save my neck. But without planks it is impossible to get back, and the *señor capitán* requests that you will at once bring or send a party with planks and gear to repair the bridge.'

'Why not bring them down from the hut?'

'Impossible, *señor teniente*. It is as much as a man's neck is worth to bring heavy articles down the steep at the top of the path. If you have been up the path, señor, you will recognise the truth of what I say.'

It seemed that the junior officer had never himself been up the path, but he called a petty officer who had, and this man confirmed the Catalan's statement. The two Germans thereupon consulted together.

While they were still talking a warning cry came from above, where the German flag drooped in the morning stillness, and there swung slowly down to them a big crate, lowered from the windlass at the cliff-top. The officer watched till it touched the beach. It was full of provisions—cans of heavy oil for the Diesel engines, and large bunches of bananas—a welcome sight to men fresh from the confinement of a submarine cruise.

Not a muscle moved in the Little Bird's face, but he thought to himself that the Señor

Bruce was no fool to drop that tempting bait just at the very moment when its appearance might turn the scale against the German officer's doubts.

In came, indeed, in the very nick of time, and the young German's face clearly showed the relief which he felt. He ordered half-a-dozen men to remain and load ship. The rest were to accompany him with gear to repair the broken bridge. 'Bring revolvers, every man,' said he as a final caution in his own tongue. 'One never knows what to expect from these cursed Spaniards.' He dropped into Spanish again for the Little Bird's benefit. 'As for you,' he said, 'you will lead the party, and I warn you that should any accident happen it will be you who will suffer.'

'With care, *señor teniente*, there should be no accident,' answered El Pajarillo with grave irony.

Two wide and solid planks were brought from the body of the vessel, and with half-a-dozen men carrying each, and the officer and El Pajarillo leading, the second party of Germans slowly mounted the path.

It was ticklish work for the carriers on the narrow track. Twice they stopped for a breather before they reached the spot where the ambush-party waited. The Little Bird,

walking in front with the knowledge that the officer's revolver was immediately behind him, could not rid himself of a certain uneasiness as to what would happen when the bugle sounded. The strain of waiting for that bugle told severely on his nerves, and when the officer gave the order for a third halt on a very narrow strip of path almost immediately opposite the ambush, he felt he had done all that could reasonably be expected of a man with a pistol at the small of his back. Profiting by the momentary diversion of the officer's attention, he turned about with lightning swiftness, and in a moment his powerful arms were fast about the astonished Hun, whose arms were pinned close to his sides as the Little Bird turned him so as to act as a shield between his men and his captor.

‘Hands up, all of you!’ shouted El Pajarillo in a terrible voice.

Almost at the same instant the bugle rang out from below, followed by the sound of a British cheer.

Before the Germans on the path had time to recover from their astonishment at the sudden turn of affairs, the shrubs parted on the rocky slope, and the ambush-party showed themselves with rifles levelled.

‘*Hände hoch!*’ cried a petty officer among

the seeming Spaniards. The pronunciation was open to criticism, but the effect was instantaneous. The Huns, trapped on the pathway, with one accord dropped their planks, which crashed down the precipitous side of the cliff, and stood in a row like men petrified, each with his hands stretched high above his head. The British petty officer detailed a couple of his men to disarm them, beginning with the sub-lieutenant, whose revolver they transferred to the Little Bird. Then the whole lot were forthwith marched back down the path to the beach.

Everything there had gone 'according to plan.' The lieutenant-commander, with a beaming face, pointed to half-a-dozen disconsolate Huns grouped under the care of a couple of sentries on the deck of his own submarine, which was now lying alongside the U-boat. While the new prisoners were being sent to join them, the consignment of useful articles which had descended from the cliff-top suddenly began to rise again into the air.

The lieutenant-commander watched its ascent with interested gaze. 'What's that Scotsman up to now?' he muttered. Then he forgot the incident in his preoccupation with his prisoners and their captured vessel. But presently the Little Bird touched him

respectfully on the shoulder and pointed sky-wards.

The lieutenant-commander looked up again, stared hard, and burst out laughing. 'Well, if that doesn't beat cock-fighting!' he said. 'Lads, here comes a consignment of real German sausages, carriage paid. Stand by to unpack!'

The crate descended to the beach. It contained, in place of stores, a parcel of four German sailors securely lashed together, with their hands bound fast to their sides. The British seamen unloaded them with many a joke, and the crate immediately reascended. Four times this method of delivery was repeated, and with the last consignment came Donald Bruce himself, grinning broadly as he bestrode the frame, and held on to the chain.

He sprang down and shook hands with the lieutenant-commander and the Little Bird. 'I was just a wee bit anxious about adding my weight,' he explained. 'But it's a good chain, lieutenant, and I wanted to get down quick and see the haul. The rest of the boys will come down by road as soon as you send up and mend the bridge. They will send you down the stores first. We might as well have them. Man, I wouldn't have missed this for wor-rlds!'

‘It puts the lid on,’ said the lieutenant-commander. ‘We’ve got the men, we’ve got the ship, and we’ve got the boodle too.’

‘What will you do with them?’ asked the Scot.

The lieutenant-commander assumed a severe expression. ‘Mr Bruce,’ he said, ‘you are endeavouring to elicit information on Service matters which might be of use to the King’s enemies. If we were within British jurisdiction, you would render yourself liable to proceedings under the Defence of the Realm Act. As it is, I will ask you what you and your piratical friend here intend to do next. You will recognise that it is not possible for me to put to sea with civilians aboard.’

‘Sir,’ said Bruce gravely, ‘I consider it my duty to inform the British consul at Santa Cruz of the suspected existence of a resort of German submarines at this point of the coast, in order that he may lodge a proper protest with the Spanish authorities, who will no doubt act upon his information.’

‘A very right proceeding,’ said the lieutenant-commander. ‘Will you deem it necessary to inform the consul of our little affair of this morning?’

The Scot slowly shook his head. ‘I should regard that as conveying information of naval

movements—which, as you doubtless know, lieutenant, we civilians are strictly forbidden to do.'

'Old man,' said the lieutenant-commander, 'the soundness of your judgment equals the fertility of your resource. You are, if I may say so, *It*. And your friend here with the unpronounceable name is also *It*. I shall not forget the name of your enterprising firm, and when this scrapping is over I hope you and I will meet with greater leisure for conversation.'

The two men clasped hands again. 'With your permission,' said Bruce, 'the Little Bird and I will go up once more by the lift. It will save us the climb, and get us the quicker to Santa Cruz.'

So, as the windlass wound up the crate again, the Scot and the Catalan ascended in it together.

'It was not so bad, Señor Bruce?' said Pajarillo modestly as they stepped out on top.

'Pajarillo *mio*, it was superb!' said Bruce.

THE ISLE OF LADIES.

I.

WHEN the old schooner *Marta* left Málaga, outward bound, there had been some idea on the part of her owners of giving her a thorough overhaul and a clean coat of paint, if and when she arrived at the Canaries. But what with the increasing price of materials, and the chance—which was felt to be considerable—that so slow and aged a craft might fall in with a U-boat on her homeward voyage, the good resolve of the owners had been indefinitely postponed. So the *Marta*, as she lay in the afternoon sunshine in the harbour of Santa Cruz, was no ornament to the port.

On her after-deck two elderly navigators, seated in wicker chairs, were taking turns at peeping through a spy-glass into the hot blue of the sky, from which came the droning of a propeller. Both men were smoking, and on a little bamboo table under a slight awning stood a bottle of country wine and a couple of glasses. From time to time they nodded, grunted, and gesticulated at each other in a manner which suggested that, however friendly

might be their mutual dispositions, they had little use for talk.

The long, swarthy Catalan handed the spy-glass to his companion and shook his head. 'Señor Bruce, too mucho brave, *mi capitan*,' said he.

'Verra true,' agreed Captain Angus. 'Young men have hot heids, ma freend. I doot the lad wull brak his neck ere we get him back tae Spain. Eh! He's comin' doon! *Abajo!*' he interpreted, moving a short forefinger in a descending spiral, and then plunging it towards the deck to illustrate his meaning.

The Little Bird sprang to his feet, consternation in his face as he stared skywards.

'Hoots!' exclaimed the Shetlander; 'ye needna fash yersel', Little Bird. The man's no fallin'. He'll come doon on an even keel.'

The Spaniard snatched the telescope, and gazed intently at the tiny spot far above. The anxiety on his face relaxed.

The whir of the propeller grew louder, then ceased for a time as the engine shut off, and the aeroplane grew rapidly larger to the vision. In graceful spirals, like a great bird, it descended till its twin floats—it was a sea-plane—were clearly visible. It seemed but

a few moments later that it settled on the smooth surface of the harbour like a gull, then glided easily towards the land.

Soon afterwards a boat shot out from the mole, and as it drew alongside the *Marta*, a young man scrambled aboard by the ladder. 'Ten thousand feet!' he exclaimed with enthusiasm as he came up to the table. 'And I flew her myself all the time. Yon's a dandy machine, Captain Angus.'

'I'm feared she wull be the death o' ye, Mr Bruce,' answered the old Scot. 'We've been obsairvin' ye wi' verra conseederable anxiety.'

The other smiled at his countryman's concern, but was not untouched by it. 'Rodriguez says I take to the air like a duck to water,' he said with pardonable pride. 'After to-day he tells me he would trust me to fly his sea-plane anywhere.'

The Catalan rose from his chair and laid his strong hands affectionately on the young man's shoulder. 'Señor Bruce,' said he in his own tongue, 'I do not approve of this flying madness of yours. Is there not excitement enough in the dangers of land and sea which you and I have experienced together?'

'Plenty indeed, Pajarillo *mio*. And for a pair of amateurs we have not had such bad

luck in hunting the grey Boche sharks that infest the seas.'

'We shall have better hunting yet,' said the Catalan grimly, 'and my poor brother whom they drowned will be yet more deeply avenged. But in the air I cannot follow you. My nerves would never stand it.'

Bruce laughed. 'When did Pablo el Pajarillo begin to have nerves?' he asked. 'Come, we will dine ashore to-night, and celebrate my successful flight.—Captain Angus'—he dropped into English—'you and Pajarillo here will do me the pleasure of sharing a dinner at the "Fonda Colón." Afterwards we shall go and listen to the band on the *plaza*.'

They made a curious trio in the hotel dining-room—the sturdy old whaling-skipper, the Catalan ex-smuggler, and the young Scotsman.

After dinner they went and sat under the trees on the Plaza de la Constitucion. At one end of the *plaza* a military band in bright uniforms played lively music, while up and down the wide square the cosmopolitan population of the little island port strolled and chatted, laughed and flirted, in the soft Southern night. Spanish officers in white tropical uniforms; dark-eyed beauties whose white necks showed like ivory columns against

black mantillas, flashing dangerous smiles behind their fans; traders and seamen of various nations; peasants in great straw hats; girls of the people with bright-coloured kerchiefs over their black locks—a motley, happy, chattering crowd, making their *paseo* in the moonlight. The warm air was filled with the odour of flowers and the pungent smell of cigarettes, across which came now and again a faint salt tang of the sea close at hand.

Two men, well dressed in light summer suits of fashionable cut, and smoking cigars, passed, conversing earnestly, close to the seat whereon the three friends were resting. One was quite young; the other had left middle age behind. It was the younger who was speaking at the moment, and a phrase of his made Donald Bruce suddenly stiffen to attention.

‘*Boum! Boum!*’ the young man was saying. ‘*Ach! es war wunderschön.*’

Bruce leaned to the Catalan. ‘Quick, Pajarillo; who are those men?’

The smuggler looked up and frowned. ‘*Por Dios*, Señor Bruce, I do not know. But I have seen the fat, ugly one who is rubbing his hands at the door of the German Consulate.’

‘Sit here till I return,’ said Bruce. He rose quietly, and as he did so the two men

sat down at a table a little farther along, and called a waiter. The young Scot stepped to the outer side of the belt of palms which encircled the *plaza*, and strolled on till he arrived directly opposite and a few feet away from where the men sat. He wished he knew more German, for, though the men were not talking loudly, their words were fairly distinct, and they evidently had no notion of being overheard. That isolated sentence which had arrested the Scot's attention was ominous enough in the mouth of a Teuton, and its significance was by no means lessened by the scattered phrases the listener could now make out.

‘Down like a kettle of hot water. *Boum! Wunderbar!* The boats tried to rescue the others, but we opened fire. “*Ach nein*; let the swine-dogs drown!” said I. Two girls were struggling in the sea quite close. Beautiful English girls—*Ach Himmel*, but so beautiful! Gold hair, brown hair, like seaweed in the water—close alongside—took hold of my hands—just in time. Lieutenant Kurt would have left them in the water. The poor Kurt—a martyr to duty—ha!’

The elder man laughed and drained his glass. ‘But where are they? Not on the ship, my good Von Lofer!’

‘*Ach nein!* Not on the ship, Herr Schwarz—on the ship one must have discipline—but on the island—the dear little island of San Roque, where nobody lives, and nobody goes save we of the U-boats. What a romance! They are there, with old Becker to guard them till we return to-morrow night. We leave by midday.’

Bruce felt suddenly sick. He had had his back to the speakers from prudence, but he risked a glance at them now. The moonlight struck full on the flabby fat face of the older man, and Bruce saw the leer which he gave his companion.

The waiter was casting glances at the Scot, and Bruce deemed it time to move. With a cold fury in his brain, he strolled on, mingling with the crowd, and presently returned to his companions.

‘Pajarillo,’ said he in a level tone which surprised himself, ‘do you know an island called San Roque?’

‘*Cierto!* But it is only an uninhabited rock, thirty leagues to the south-west.’

With frowning brows, staring absently at the crowd of promenaders, the Scot considered his plan. ‘Pajarillo,’ said he at length, ‘those two men are under the trees a little way along. The younger commands a U-boat. Sometime

between now and to-morrow midday he rejoins his ship. Watch him like his shadow. Delay him by any means you can. Kill him if necessary; but delay him!—Captain Angus'—he spoke in English—'please go to the British consul. Inform him that sometime to-morrow, probably towards evening, a Hun submarine will land its officers on the island of San Roque, where two English girls are in their power.'

'And you, ma freend?'

'If I have any luck, I shall have rescued those girls by to-morrow noon. If I don't, captain, you must tell M'Iloyes that I did my best. Good-bye!' He stood up and shook hands with both companions, and without another word strode away.

Bruce went straight to a hotel, where by good luck he found the man he sought at supper.

'Rodriguez,' said he, plunging into his subject, 'at what figure do you value your seaplane as she lies?'

'She cost me forty thousand pesetas to build and fit.'

'Add your trade profit, and I will buy her from you to-night, and give you a draft on my firm immediately. If I am lucky, you will have the machine back by this time to-

morrow, and you may keep a quarter of the purchase price for her hire.'

'*Dios!* but you are in a hurry, my friend!'

'A life-and-death hurry, Rodriguez. You know me. Is it a deal?'

'You give a man indigestion!' protested the other. 'If you must have the machine, have her. But smoke a cigarette, for pity's sake, while I eat this orange, and tell me all about it.'

'Impossible. It is confidential. I will write the draft now; and when you have finished, Rodriguez, you must come down to the mole and make sure the *Stormy Petrel* is ready for a long journey.'

The inventor looked up from peeling his orange. 'How about the neutrality of Spain?' he inquired.

'My word of honour—it shall not be compromised.'

'*Basta!* Then I ask no more. We have to be so particular, you know.'

II.

It was with an extraordinary feeling of exhilaration that Donald Bruce an hour or two later, alone in the tiny body of the *Stormy Petrel*, felt the seaplane lift herself from the glassy surface of the harbour, and with engines

roaring sweep up to meet the dawn. New as he was to this tricky business of flight, he understood perfectly that he was playing a desperate hazard. It was the wildest adventure to which he had yet set his hand, but he knew that if he failed, the doom of those two English girls in their island prison was sealed. Even if success crowned his daring, he realised that the girls themselves might lack the nerve to fall in with his plan. He dared not stop to consider eventualities, but flying high and fast, with every faculty tense upon his work, he soared towards his distant goal. The red sun rolled up out of the sea, and Bruce anxiously watched his compass to make sure of his landfall. So small a deviation from the course would suffice to make him miss the tiny islet, and send him faring like a lost bird over the wide waste of the Atlantic.

That the sun was behind him proved his salvation. He had been flying about an hour, and was growing uneasy at the bare expanse of ocean, when, far on his port bow, he caught the gleam of the early light reflected from what seemed a little bank of cloud low down on the horizon. For a few minutes he was in doubt; but as he turned towards the bank it took an outline, and he understood that, novice

as he was, he had not allowed enough for the push of the easterly breeze.

A little more, and the islet lay directly beneath him. He slid down to a thousand feet, and circled it, looking for a place to alight. On its western shore a little cove ran in among its rocks. Bruce knew nothing of the perils which the waters there might hold, but blessed his luck that the cove was on the lee side. Planing carefully down to ocean-level, he ran boldly in. On one side of the cove was a beach of white sand, and here he ran ashore.

He now found himself confronted by an unforeseen difficulty. He had no anchor in the seaplane! He must, therefore, leave her on the beach. Fortunately the tide was falling, but it meant that for some hours, till the water rose again, he would be unable, whatever happened, to re-embark. There was no help for it, however; so, having divested himself of his airman's suit, he waited till the retiring water left his mount dry on the shore, then cautiously advanced to explore the island.

The sandy beach had no great extent, and behind it was a jumble of rocks similar to those which on all other sides surrounded the cove. There seemed to be only one practi-

cable track through these, and Bruce took it—to be unpleasantly surprised as he emerged on to higher ground by a hoarse challenge.

‘Halt!’

He found himself faced at ten paces by the barrel of a rifle, levelled at him by a stocky, hard-featured fellow in naval uniform, standing knee-deep in tall grass.

‘*Hände hoch!*’ ordered the German.

There was nothing else for it. The fellow had Bruce fairly covered, and though the Scot had a revolver, it was not in his hand, and might as well, therefore, have been in the sea. Inwardly raging at his easy capture, Bruce threw up his hands in obedience. His mortification was increased by the sight of two girls standing together at the door of a small tent a score of paces behind the German sailor.

‘You are an *Engländer?*’ demanded the German roughly.

‘*Nein!*’ Bruce comforted his conscience by the reflection that no true-born Scot ever admitted that he was English. ‘I speak very little German,’ he continued haltingly in that language. ‘Can you speak Spanish, my man?’

‘Spanish? Bah! A German speaks German. So you are a Spaniard!’

‘I have just come from Tenerife.’

‘What are you doing here?’

The Scot’s wits were working at high pressure, recalling the few scattered phrases he had overheard on the *plaza* at Santa Cruz, to evolve from them, if he could, a plan of escape from this predicament.

‘I come from your officer, Herr von Lofer,’ said he boldly.

The German, obviously surprised, lowered his rifle a few inches, but kept it ready.

‘That is not likely,’ he grunted.

‘Nevertheless it is true.’

The two girls had approached. Bruce felt his ideas clearing. ‘Your name is Becker, is it not?’ he inquired.

‘That is my name.’

‘Well, my good Becker, it is very uncomfortable looking into the barrel of your rifle, which, after all, might go off. Do the ladies understand German?’

‘No. Like all the English, they have no *kultur*.’

‘So much the better. You see, Herr von Lofer happened to mention the delicate duty which he and Lieutenant Kurt had entrusted to you. You follow me, Becker?’

‘*Gewiss!*’

Bruce resolved to take a header into the waters of untruth. ‘Well, Becker, you know

what young men are, I dare say. Herr von Lofer was boasting about the ladies whom he and his comrade had secured as prisoners, and I laid him a wager that I would see the ladies before he did, and judge for myself of the justice of his claims. You see, I have won my wager. It was agreed that you should be the time-keeper; so, if you will have the goodness to sign a statement that I arrived here at 7 A.M., and that I saw the ladies under your charge, I shall have pleasure in handing you a note for twenty-five pesetas, before returning by the same road.'

To Bruce's relief, as he concluded this inventive effort, a grin of comprehension spread over the stolid countenance of the German. 'That is rather like my officer,' said he. 'I have no objection to do that; but I have neither paper nor pencil.'

'I have both,' said Bruce. 'If I have your permission to lower my hands for the purpose of getting them, I shall give them to you.'

'Since you come from my officer, I am at your disposal, *mein Herr*, so far as my duty permits. Give me your notebook and I will sign.'

The Scot produced his pocket-book, opened it at a blank page, and presented it with a pencil to the Hun. The latter squatted on

the ground Turkish fashion, his rifle laid upon his crossed knees, and got ready to write.

‘*Hände hoch!*’

In his excitement Bruce let out the order with such a shout that the squatting German and the watching girls started alike. The German dropped the notebook and made a swift snatch at his rifle, but before he could raise it a bullet from the Scotsman’s revolver smashed his trigger-hand. Forthwith he threw up both arms in token of surrender.

‘Becker,’ said Bruce gravely, ‘it would be wise not to take another chance like that. It might have been your head, you know. Keep your hands well up, if you wish to report to Lieutenant von Lofer.’

He turned to the girls and spoke in English. ‘Ladies, I have come to save you if I can. If you know where to lay hands on a piece of cord, we shall make this gentleman fast, and then we can consider what is the best course to follow.’

One of the girls was fair, the other dark, and in praising their good looks Von Lofer had not exaggerated.

She of the golden hair ran back to the tent. The dark-eyed beauty came up to Bruce. Her colour was high. ‘Can I help?’

‘Can you use a revolver?’

‘Yes.’ She smiled a little shyly.

‘Then hold this one to his neck, while I tie him up. Shoot him like a dog if he resists.—Becker’—he touched the German’s shoulder—‘you may lower your arms ; but if you attempt to resist, you are a dead man.’

Fair-Hair had brought a coil of cord. Bruce trussed up the prisoner with a choice variety of nautical knots, then tended the smashed hand, and finally picked up the rifle.

‘I think that will do, ladies, and I’m awfully obliged for your help. May I introduce myself?’ He produced his card, and learned their names in turn. Fair-Hair was Miss Elfrida Fergusson, of Brighton ; Dark-Eyes was the Honourable Evelyn Northburn, from Cape Town.

‘Ladies,’ said Bruce, ‘we have about seven hours to make our arrangements. Barring miracles, those Boche blackguards will be back to-night. In seven hours the tide will float my seaplane down there in the cove. She will carry three at a pinch, and Tenerife is ninety miles away—say a couple of hours’ flying with the wind against us. You will come?’

‘Oh Mr Bruce!’ The Honourable Evelyn, who had held the revolver a minute before with so steady a hand, suddenly broke down, and threw herself into her companion’s arms.

Fair-Hair smiled bravely over her shoulder at the Scot. 'Last night we prayed,' she said simply, 'and here you come, just like an angel of deliverance.'

'Oh, I say!' Bruce protested. 'I'm not so steady on the wing as that, you know. In fact, as a flying-man, I'm a mere amateur. There's quite a chance we may be drowned.'

'There is the certainty that we should drown ourselves if we stayed here,' said Miss Fergusson.

'Let's go and look at the bus,' said Bruce. He took an arm of each, and led them down to see his machine. They touched it caressingly, as a man might touch a dog that had saved him. Then for an hour they showed him the islet, and told him about the sinking of their ship. They were, it seemed, the sole survivors, the rest having been done to death by the pirates as they tried to escape in their boats. The Scotsman's blood boiled at the recital. To prevent their dwelling on the horrors they had lived through, he told them something of his adventures in the campaign which he and the Little Bird had undertaken.

'I should like to see that Spaniard,' said the Honourable Evelyn.

'I hope you will, to-night, Miss Northburn,' he answered.

III.

Lunch, and another walk along the ocean-girt rocks, and then, as they wandered on the north face of the islet, Fair-Hair gripped Bruce suddenly by the arm, and pointed far to seaward.

Four or five miles out, but clear in the shining air, a white patch of foam was visible, and in the midst of it a tiny black line, making for the island.

Bruce looked at his watch. Not for an hour yet would his seaplane float, and long ere that the devil-craft would be turning into the cove. 'Come!' he said, and led them to the tent. Becker, all bound as he was, was standing looking out to sea, a smile of grim satisfaction on his hard face. Bruce whipped out a knife and cut the fellow's bonds.

'Becker,' said he, 'if you wish your officers to find you alive, do exactly what you are told. Walk in front of us.' They hurried down to the beach. 'Girls,' said Bruce, 'we have got to haul the *Stormy Petrel* into the water. I should have thought of using this villain before.' He showed them how to get the greatest purchase, and set Becker to work with his sound arm. He calculated they had twenty minutes. It was desperate toil, but

the seaplane moved. In a quarter of an hour she was at the water's edge.

‘One of you must run to the tent, and get all the wraps you can find,’ said Bruce; and the Honourable Evelyn, her brown hair loose with her efforts, ran off. Bruce helped Fair-Hair into his air-suit, and made Becker remove his coat, which he appropriated. Then Miss Northburn returned with the German's top-coat and a blanket—all she could find. Bruce wrapped her in the coat, and settled both girls in the tiny car, telling them how to keep clear of the controls. The water was now beginning to lift the floats. Revolver in hand, he took his seat in the pilot's place, and ordered Becker to drag the seaplane into the water.

The Hun obeyed, but having done so, stood in front of the machine, the water up to his middle, and grinned triumphantly. ‘You are too late, swine-dog Englishman. Look!’

Bruce looked, and his heart came into his mouth. The submarine was turning into the mouth of the cove. Becker grabbed the fore-end of the nearest float to wrench it round, but the Scot dropped him with a bullet through the brain, and almost at the same moment jammed over the starting-lever. The propeller whirled behind him as the *Stormy Petrel* shot towards the oncoming U-boat.

Would she rise? Would she rise with her threefold burden? The cold drops ran down the pilot's set face as they raced into the very arms of the enemy. He saw the men gathered on her deck. For a moment they seemed dazed with sheer surprise; then a hasty order rang out, and rifles were levelled. And at that very moment, barely averting a collision, the seaplane shook the salt water from her heels, and soared into her proper element.

A crackle of rifle-fire burst below them. Bullets pinged past their ears. Splinters flew from the outspread wings. But the *Stormy Petrel* kept the air. A white cloudlet burst into being a hundred yards in front. Another, and another. Shrapnel! At one of them the slender fabric of the machine quivered as though she had struck some aerial obstacle. Then the cloudlets dropped behind. Bruce warily banked the seaplane round, and, like a homing pigeon, she flew for her distant nest.

Looking backward and downward, he saw the U-boat was following. He looked at the girls huddled at his back, and they smiled. Gallant lasses! On and on they flew, and the submarine dropped out of sight, but he knew that with glasses she could still keep them in view.

Then, with a sudden dismay, he noted a change in the sound of his engines. Something was overheated in that delicate mechanism of power. The distressing symptoms gradually increased. There was nothing for it; he must descend. For another mile or two he held on, struggling against the inevitable. Then he planed down to the ocean.

The girls looked anxious, but said not a word. 'The old lady does not like her load,' Bruce assured them airily. 'All the same, she's got to do it. We'll give her ten minutes, then off she goes again.' But in his heart he wondered if she would.

Amateur as he was, he could find nothing wrong. The tanks were sound, and though his store of petrol was lessening at a somewhat alarming rate, there was plenty yet. Time was called by the bursting of a shell a few hundred yards wide of them. From where they rocked on the swell they could not see their pursuers, but the bursting shell needed no corroboration. Bruce started the engines again, and once more the *Stormy Petrel* sped for Tenerife.

The next flight was shorter, the half-cooled engines rapidly heating again. Yet they made some miles, and Bruce judged it safe to take seven minutes' rest. This time the warning

shell fell closer, bursting in the water and splashing them with spray. Onward again, a still shorter flight, and once more the cruel mortification of a forced descent. Four minutes was all the pilot dared take this time; and when he rose, the U-boat, deadly persevering, was well in sight astern. Again the puffs of cloudlet told of shrapnel hurled after them. A fourth time they rose and sank.

‘Two minutes only, ladies,’ said Bruce gaily. He was perhaps a little hysterical, for the position was getting on his nerves.

Said the Honourable Evelyn, ‘I think there is a storm coming up. Do you see the clouds ahead, Mr Bruce?’

‘Tenerife,’ said the Scot. ‘And something else.’

‘What?’

‘Destroyers! Three of them. The Union-Jack for ever!’ This time he would not come down. The *Stormy Petrel* might break her heart, but she should fly till she dropped.

And so she did. She very nearly made a nose-dive of it at the end, and they all got a salt-water wetting some three hundred yards from the last of three black destroyers tearing at full speed in line ahead, cutting the water in three white V’s with their foaming bows. The last of the three slowed down

sufficiently to lower a boat, then raced after her companions.

Notwithstanding the promptitude of their rescue, pilot and passengers were as near drowning when pulled aboard as they were ever likely to be. The girls came round first, and when Bruce at length opened his eyes in response to a stiff dose of cognac, he saw them comfortably bestowed in the sternsheets, on either side of the midshipman in charge. The Honourable Evelyn was wearing the midshipman's coat, and they were dressed, for the rest, in a diverting combination of dry nautical garments obligingly subscribed by the crew.

'Good - evening, sir,' said the 'snotty' politely. 'I'm afraid we can't tow your bus back to Santa Cruz, but we'll just hang around here till the boys come back. They're having good sport, by the noise.'

Heavy cannonading shook the air.

'You came up in the nick of time,' said the Scot rather weakly. 'I'm awfully obliged to you.'

'Don't mench !' said the midshipman. 'It's thanks to that long-legged Dago up forrard. He's a sport. It was he who pulled you out.'

Bruce raised himself on his elbow, and saw, erect in the fore-end of the launch, the gaunt figure of the Little Bird, shading his eyes with

his horny brown hands while he watched intently the progress of the distant fight.

‘He and two or three more came aboard off Santa Cruz,’ said the midshipman, lighting a cigarette. ‘He was in a tremendous state of excitement. By great good luck we had an R.N.V.R. man on board who used to be a language teacher at some London show before he saw his way to better things, and, from what he could make out from Daddy Long-legs, the skipper of that U-boat yonder had chartered a shore boat to put him aboard. Your friend, who seems to have a kind of grudge against U-boats, tried to persuade them not to take on the job, but the Hun was paying them good money, and they wouldn’t listen to reason. So what does Daddy Long-legs do but get hold of another boat himself, and just as Mr Hun was about to board his ship, Daddy rams his boat hard amidships. The Boche got picked up by his own men after all; but just at that minute, as luck would have it, we happened along in our destroyer, and instead of stopping to sink Daddy, as he had ordered his fellows to do, Mr Hun had to submerge at the double. The Dago and his countrymen hung on to what was left of their craft till we fished them out, and then he told us a story about some rendezvous at San Roque.

We thought at first it was bogey, but a few hours later we had it confirmed from a good quarter ashore. So here we are !’

The cannonade grew fiercer than ever, and then suddenly ceased. The midshipman sprang up. ‘I say,’ he exclaimed, ‘they’ve done Mr Hun in this time, I do believe! Hurrah!’

The boat’s crew burst into a cheer, and the Little Bird turned round with a gleam of white teeth. His eyes met Bruce’s.

‘Come here, Pajarillo *mio*,’ said Bruce in Spanish. ‘You have saved my life, and I have promised the ladies here to introduce you to them. Miss Northburn’—he turned and spoke in his own tongue—‘this is the brave companion of whom I spoke on the island.’

The Catalan leaned over the Scot and smiled, though he shook his head. ‘Señor Bruce,’ said he, ‘we have had the most magnificent adventure. But you will remember I told you there was too much danger in this flying business.’

‘Danger,’ said Bruce, ‘is the spice of life.

‘True,’ answered the Catalan, smiling again.

‘*Peligro y amor, de la vida son la flor.*’

‘Pajarillo, I said nothing about *amor*.’

‘You did not, señor. Nevertheless, the rhyme requires it. And so does a man.’

CATCHING A TARTAR.

I.

NO ship ever looked a more helpless prey for a U-boat than the old schooner *Marta*, homeward bound from Tenerife to Málaga. Her scarred and ancient timbers cried aloud for the paint-pot; her sails were patched and parti-coloured; and when she rolled to the swell, lolling slowly on her way, her hull below the water-line showed foul with weed. She had been lying for three months in the harbour of Santa Cruz in the Canaries, doing nothing apparent, her crew—it was generally accepted—afraid to go home. When at last the lame old Shetlander in command of her declared to some shore acquaintances in the 'Fonda Colón' that he was 'fed up' with the Canaries, and meant to get back to Spain, submarines or no submarines, there was a significant shrugging of shoulders. No one believed he would venture. On the day the *Marta* actually hoisted sail and stood out into the Atlantic, bets were freely offered on the mole at twenty to one that the ship would never see Málaga again.

And yet, such is the perversity of fate,

following the ordinary peace-time route of the Cape liners, she almost reached the Strait without sighting a periscope. She carried no wireless; she was in touch with nothing and nobody that could help her—unless you count the poor protection of the yellow-and-red Spanish flag at her main; and her gunless decks were littered with a miscellaneous assortment of island produce for which she had no room in her hold.

‘One might imagine our fellows had cleared the shark-boats out of the sea, Captain Angus,’ said the young Scotsman in an old blue jersey who stood at the wheel.

‘Ay, Mr Bruce. Imagination gangs a lang wey. But I’m thinkin’ the reality winna bear it oot. No yet.’

‘I believe you will be disappointed if we don’t have an opportunity to try our little plan, captain!’

‘Disappointed?’ The old Shetlander touched his false leg—memento of his encounter with a German mine. ‘Mon, Donald, I’m no lookin’ for adventures at ma age. I’m no like your freend the Little Bird there, wha’s auld eneuch to ken better, especially conseederin’ that his ain brither was drooned by a U-boat.’

The Little Bird had just emerged from behind a lot of banana-crates, stacked abaft

the mainmast. He was carrying an oil-can. He set the incongruous article down on the deck, wiped his hands on his greasy overalls, and with oily fingers proceeded to roll a cigarette.

‘All in order, Pajarillo?’ asked Bruce in Spanish.

‘All beautiful, Señor Bruce. And the rat-trap, too.’ Pajarillo laid one hand lovingly on a length of rope that passed along the ship’s side near the chains, suspended at about eighteen inches from the deck by a curious arrangement of cords running on pulley-blocks. ‘By this time to-morrow, if the wind holds, I shall be eating olla-podrida with my wife and family. *Ay de mi!* We have been too long separated, señor.’

Suddenly from the masthead rang a warning cry: ‘*Submarino! De á babor!*’

Pajarillo took the cigarette from his lips and stiffened to his full height. Captain Angus hobbled to the lee side of the ship and searched the ocean with his binoculars.

‘Yonder she spouts—the ugly deil!’ he grunted, as he passed the glasses to Bruce.

A league or more away, approaching them boldly on the surface, was the sinister shape of a submarine. Angus whipped out a whistle, and gave three shrill calls. Immediately on

the sound the Spanish crew tumbled up with all hands, and went running to various points of the ship.

‘Little Bird, ye’ve drilled them weel!’ said the old skipper approvingly.

Bruce translated the compliment.

The Little Bird smiled, though his teeth were set. ‘They are frightened, but they will do their work, Señor Bruce. I have told them what to expect if things go wrong. Oh, you can rely on them!’

‘The question is,’ said Angus, ‘wull they blaw us oot o’ the water first, an’ tak’ oor names an’ addresses efter, or wull they pey the Spanish flag the compliment o’ a veesit o’ inspection?’

Almost as he spoke a deafening explosion shook the air, and a shell burst a couple of cables’ length from the schooner’s bows.

‘That means “Heave to!”’ said Angus. ‘Pass the word, Mr Bruce.’

Bruce gave the order to Pajarillo, who was nominal mate, and the Little Bird roared it out in his own tongue. In a minute or two the sails were backed, and the *Marta* lay rolling her old timbers in the swell, awaiting the Germans’ next command.

The submarine, her guns trained on the schooner, approached within a quarter of a

mile, and signalled that she was sending a boarding-party.

‘Send away, ye lubbers!’ muttered Angus. ‘Noo for the performance, Mr Bruce. Keep a cool heid, an’ tell yersel’ it’s only a rehairsal.’

The Little Bird had disappeared, and so had half the crew. The rest lowered the boarding-ladder over the ship’s side, and stood in line on deck, unarmed, behind the two Britishers, the picture of docile submission.

The Germans had lowered a boat, whose approach to the schooner was covered by their guns. The boat drew alongside, and an officer stood up in the bows with a pointed revolver.

‘*Hände hoch!*’ he cried. ‘*Subida las manos!*’

‘The fule means “Hands up!”’ said Angus. Obediently he raised his own hands, and the rest followed his example. The Germans, a dozen in all, clambered aboard—two officers with levelled revolvers, and the others with fixed bayonets. They formed up on the *Marta’s* deck near the chains where they had boarded.

In halting Castilian the commander inquired, ‘Who is the captain of this ship?’

Angus caught the word *capitan*. ‘That’s me, ma mon,’ said he.

‘Ha!’ The German snorted gleefully. His eyes flamed. ‘An English ship!’

‘Nay. A Spanish ship, ye dirty pirate! Canna ye see the flag?’ Captain Angus pointed to the Spanish colours at the mast-head. As he pointed he shouted, ‘Ahoy!’

What happened next might have defied explanation, unless one had studied that curious arrangement of rope that ran along the *Marta’s* side. Any one who had been standing at the foot of the after companion-way—down which the end of the rope was led through blocks rigged at the deck-level—would have seen half-a-dozen hairy-armed Andalusians tallying on the rope and hauling as though a golden galleon of King Philip were coming up at the other end. But the Hun officers and men saw nothing of these concealed scene-shifters. They only received the effect of that hidden cause. And the effect was that, with almost the swiftness of a scythe-stroke, a half-inch steel cable swept across their bit of deck from rearward of them, at a height of about eighteen inches from the deck, catching them with paralysing force in the calves of their legs just behind the knees, and tipping every man Jack of them, officers and all, on their backs on the *Marta’s* deck, within a couple of seconds of Angus’s ‘Ahoy!’

A shot or two from the German officers’ revolvers went off in the tumble, but no

damage was done thereby. Almost simultaneously the banana-crates abaft the main-mast slid apart, and when the tumbled Teutons had picked themselves up, the two officers found themselves covered in their turn by the levelled revolvers of Angus and Bruce, while in the space between the banana-crates squatted the bony figure of the Little Bird behind a Lewis gun, which completely commanded the entire group of Germans.

‘Hands up, Fritz, and quick about it!’ shouted Bruce.

The pirates, seeing themselves trapped, lost no time in obeying.

The Shetland captain, his ruddy face ruddier than ever, and his bushy brows bent in a grim frown, turned to the senior of the two officers, who had the air of a man of some consideration. ‘Mon,’ said he, ‘ye look tae me like the skipper o’ yon murder-ship. I dinna ken, and I dinna greatly care. But ye can tell yer blackguards in the boat below to pull awa’ back to yer ship, an’ say, wi’ ma compliments, that if they pit so much as a rifle-bullet aboard this hooker afore we fetch Gibraltar, there’s no a cut-throat o’ ye here that wull ever see yer Kaiser twist his moustaches again. Dae ye onnerstaund that?’

The German, pale with wrath and humilia-

tion, uttered the one word '*Vorwärts!*' and looked towards his men. There was a moment's hesitation; then one burly fellow made a bull-like rush for the old Scot. Before he had covered three yards Donald Bruce dropped him with a bullet through the heart. The rest stood still.

'Ye skulkin' cooard!' said Angus. 'Noo dae my biddin', quick!'

'Do I understand,' asked the German in perfect English, 'that you actually propose to keep me and my men as hostages on board your wretched wind-jammer, to secure yourself against sinking by my comrades over there?'

'Ye've got it pairfectly,' said Angus.

'And if I refuse to send such a message to my ship?'

'In that case I'll pass the wor-rd tae ma freend there wi' the pop-gun.' Angus nodded in the direction of the Little Bird.

'You Scottish blockhead!' exclaimed the officer, still, however, keeping his hands well above his head. 'Do you know that this is not war, but rank piracy? You are under the Spanish flag, and by all the laws of nations you should be hanged. When we arrive at Zeebrugge I shall make it my business to teach you how to behave to a German officer and a Prussian count.'

‘I’m no gangin’ that wey,’ retorted Angus coolly; ‘and if ye dinna dae what I say afore ye’re ten seconds aulder, the next that wull “count” ye wull be the muckle black deil when he aups his front-door to bid ye welcome. Ane—two—three’——

With a growl like a trapped beast, the Prussian called out an order, and almost immediately the plash of oars was heard as the boat which had brought him and his companions pulled away from the schooner.

‘Noo, Mr Bruce,’ said Angus, ‘if ye’ll pass the word tae thae Dagos o’ oors to tie up this bunch o’ scoondrels, we’ll be gettin’ on oor road. Have them oot, ane at a time, an’ keep the Little Bird coverin’ the rest. Start wi’ the officers.’

The order was given, and carried out with methodical thoroughness by the Spanish crew under Bruce’s direction. The Germans were roped together in a batch right in front of the machine-gun, where the Little Bird remained at his post, watching the proceedings with a satisfied smile. Meanwhile not a sign came from the submarine, which had taken her boat aboard again.

‘I doot she’s puzzled,’ said Angus to Bruce. ‘She kens we mean business; an’ tae ma thinkin’ we’ve bagged her skipper. She darena

leave him for fear o' the Kaiser, an' she darena come to fetch him for fear o' the Little Bird. Oh ay, she's got a heid-full to think about !'

The younger man laughed, but he did not altogether share the captain's optimism. The *Marta* was forging ahead again before a good breeze, and the U-boat, like a watchful shark, was following steadily in her wake. A few miles to starboard the African coast loomed like a cloud on the horizon.

'I wish it was day coming on, instead of night,' said Bruce.

'Hoots, son ! dinna fash yersel'. Mon, Donald, it's ma opeenion we'll hae some fine sport the nicht. Gang an' tak' a look at the chart.'

Donald did so, and observed with interest various complicated patterns of dotted lines and digits, from which he perceived that the coast just to the east of them was edged with a series of banks shoaling to two fathoms, and in places even less.

'Aweel ?' said Captain Angus when he returned.

'You're not going to run us ashore, captain ?'

'Nay ; I'm no sunk that low, Mr Bruce. But I'm gaein' to gie Mr Hun the nicht o'

his lifetime. Ye see, if my supposection is correct, there's nobbut a young lad in trainin' left in chairge o' that pirate, an' when he obsairves the course we're makin' he'll be sair puzzled. But he'll think we ken where we're gaein', an' he'll tell himsel' that where we can float he can float. An' that's juist where yon little Hun wull be mistaken, if I'm ony judge o' a ship. But what'll fash him still waur wull be that he winna ken but what we're makin' for some spot where oor ain folk may hae a warship hidden up a creek, an' he'll ken verra weel that if a warship comes oot efter him, there's nae depth o' water for him to duck his heid in. And a' the time he daurna quit his dear captain an' count. Oh, he'll fret sair wi' the heidache the nicht !'

'Suppose we touch bottom ourselves,' said Bruce.

'Then the passengers wull hae to get oot an' push,' answered Angus with a grin. 'Starboard hellum, there !'

II.

So the *Marta* squared away for the coast, leaving the sunset flaming on her wake, and the U-boat duly followed in her track, sometimes ranging up so close that a biscuit might have been tossed from one deck to the other.

Once the captive German commander began to shout directions from the *Marta's* deck, but Angus cut him short.

‘If ye canna keep yer mooth shut, I’ll hae to muzzle ye,’ said he. ‘A muzzle wudna look weel on a Prussian count, ye ken.’

The Hun swore in his own language, but gave no further orders.

The sun went down into the ocean, and the stars gleamed out in the purple night sky. Bruce and the Little Bird relieved each other from time to time at the Lewis gun. Supper was served to the prisoners where they were, and blankets were given them, though the night was warm in that subtropical latitude.

A little after midnight Captain Angus was standing by the helmsman, while the Little Bird, leaning on the rail near, was rolling cigarettes, and smoking them as fast as they were rolled. Suddenly the Spaniard uttered an exclamation, and laying his big hand on the captain’s shoulder, pointed astern.

The Shetlander followed the pointing arm, and nodded. ‘*Si, si. Verra guid. Muy bien.* Top-hole, Little Bird!’ He clapped the Spaniard on the back.

In the dim starlight could be faintly discerned the shape of the submarine; but every minute, as they watched and the *Marta* glided

onward through the night, the shape grew fainter and more distant, and presently it was no longer visible.

‘Rin an’ tell Mr Bruce we’ve hooked oor fish,’ said Angus.

The Little Bird’s English vocabulary was unequal to this, but he caught at the name of Bruce, and moved off with a chuckle. Before he reached the spot, however, where the younger Scot was mounting guard with the machine-gun, a blaze of white light suddenly enveloped the *Marta* from stem to stern. In the dazzling beam every rope and spar stood out as clearly as by day. The light vanished as swiftly as it had come, and the night seemed more dark than before. There was no sound but the steady wash of the water against the schooner’s sides, and the slow creak of the rigging. A quarter of an hour passed thus. Then the searchlight dazzled them again, and from the blackness outside it a hoarse challenge roared through a megaphone.

‘*Marta*, ahoy! Heave to, or I sink you!’

‘Ay, ay, sir!’ shouted Angus gleefully. ‘Mon, Donald, they’re British! Heave her to, an’ quick’s the word. Ower wi’ the ladder.’

Scarcely had the schooner’s way stopped when a boat bumped alongside. A slim sub-

lieutenant tumbled aboard at the head of half-a-dozen seamen, and stood a moment staring at the group of captured Germans. Captain Angus stepped forward and saluted rigidly.

‘What the blazes is this, captain?’ inquired the lieutenant.

‘It’s juist a few veesitors, makin’ a trip tae Gib, sir.’ In a few words Angus recounted the adventure of the evening.

‘Well, I’m dashed!’ said the lieutenant. His blue eyes shone with merriment. ‘You ought to be an admiral, captain. Been in the Service?’

‘Only the mine-sweepers, till I got this.’ Angus touched his artificial leg.

‘“Only,”’ repeated the young officer. ‘God bless you, captain! that “only” is a mighty big word. We had a tip that there was a shark-ship working off the coast here, but this beats cock-fighting!’

‘It’s none sae bad, sir,’ said Angus modestly.

‘And we actually thought you were in league with her!’

‘As for that,’ said the old Shetlander, ‘ye’re none sae far oot o’ your reckonin’. For we left her stuck on a sand-bank aboot a league tae the south’ard o’ this verra spot.’

‘The devil you have!’

‘The deil we hae indeed, sir,’ said Angus politely. ‘Ye’ll get her if ye’re quick, afore the tide floats her off.’

The lieutenant turned. ‘Hear that, men? Three cheers for the *Marta*! Hip, hip, hurrah!’

The bluejackets gave them lustily, and the lieutenant, springing into the schooner’s shrouds, signalled rapidly to his ship. He was still in the rigging when the searchlight swung round, leaving the schooner in darkness. Almost before the men of the *Marta* had picked out the far-off outline of the U-boat, now caught in the ray, there was a thunderous roar and a leaping tongue of flame from close aboard. Another and another.

Angus stood staring through his binoculars.

‘After you, captain,’ said the lieutenant, jumping down.

The Shetlander handed over the glasses. ‘She’s done,’ said he. ‘Thae gunners o’ yours are proper war economists, I’m thinkin’. It’s *Kamerad* a’ roon’, sir.’

The lieutenant looked. ‘The white flag—and she never fired a shot!’ he cried.

‘It’s a wise fish that kens when it’s hooked, sir,’ said Angus. ‘What wull we dae wi’ the twelve scallywags trussed up on deck? I was hopin’ your commandin’ officer wud tak’

them ower. What wi' the food economy campaign, an' the onsairtainties o' navigation, they'll be a wee bit in oor wey on the *Marta*.'

'We'll take care of them for you, captain. And if I'm not mistaken, my skipper will keep an eye on you as far as the Rock. Why, you might land another fish before you get home—such an innocent-looking old windjammer as you have.'

'I'd be muckle obleeged tae ye, sir, for yer ship's company. I'm gettin' an auld man, ye ken, an' it's nairvous wark aroon' the Strait the noo.'

'I believe you're winking, you wicked old Scot,' the lieutenant said. 'Never mind. When we all get to Gib with our boodle, we'll have you and your bold buccaneers ashore, and we'll celebrate the occasion as it ought to be celebrated.'

Which they did.

CAPTAIN CARLOTTA.

I.

‘THIS is a bad finish to a good voyage, Señor Bruce.’

The sun-tanned old Catalan crooked his elbow round the tiller of the open boat, while with his nervy hands he sheltered a sulphur-match from the wind and lit a cigarette.

By great good luck not a man of the crew had been lost when the poor old schooner *Marta*, of Málaga, had been hit by the coward torpedo. Every one of the Andalusian crew was either in this boat or in the other, which, at about a mile distance, was also making for the Spanish coast. Still, it was hard luck losing the ship within a league or two of home.

‘The brutes must have seen us put in at Gibraltar,’ said Donald Bruce. The young Scot was feeling very sick from the horrible shock of the explosion, just a quarter of an hour before. ‘If they knew how we landed that pirate crew as prisoners on the Rock, we should get short shrift, Pajarillo *mio*.’

The Catalan blew out a mouthful of smoke, and smiled. There was a look of rugged

philosophy about his deep-lined face. 'The trumps go round the table, Señor Bruce. We have none to-day.'

They had none, indeed. A hundred yards away from them a periscope poked up suddenly from the water, and the ugly shape of a submarine emerged like an evil fish from the blue depths. With one accord the Andalusians ceased rowing.

The U-boat closed, and an officer and several men appeared on her gleaming wet deck. Speaking in Castilian, the officer called out, 'Who is the captain of that schooner?'

'I am,' answered the Scot, standing up in the sternsheets. 'Keep still, Pajarillo! They are going to take the captain prisoner.'

'No, *por Dios!* It is I who am the captain!' cried the Little Bird, drawing himself up proudly as he faced the German.

The latter smiled sardonically. 'As there seems some doubt on the point, you shall both come aboard here, and we will examine your claims at leisure.'

'*Señor comandante,*' said Pajarillo with dignity, 'you have sunk, in Spanish territorial waters, a Spanish ship, sailing under the flag of Spain.'

The Hun spat viciously into the sea.

‘That for your Spanish flag and your territorial waters! Come aboard, you dogs! before I hurry you with a machine-gun.’

There was no help for it, and the two men boarded the shark-ship.

‘Clear off, the rest of you!’ ordered the German; and the terrified boat’s crew lost no time in obeying. Then he turned fiercely on his prisoners. ‘Now tell me, quick, which of you is the captain of that wind-jammer?’

‘I am,’ said Bruce.

‘I am,’ said Pajarillo.

Captain Angus, it must be understood, was in the other boat, half-way now to the Spanish shore.

‘Curse you!’ exclaimed the Hun. He looked keenly at the two men, and his cruel eyes rested on the younger. ‘You have the look of an English swine-dog,’ said he. ‘Are you one?’

‘I am a Scotsman,’ was the reply.

‘So much the worse. You have just come from Gibraltar. You need not deny it, for we have followed you. Tell me now the truth, and I will spare your wretched lives. Tell me lies, and I leave you to the fishes. How long were you in Gibraltar?’

‘Two days,’ said Bruce.

‘What regiments are quartered there?’

‘I am a Scotsman.’

‘That is your answer?’

‘You asked for the truth. You have it.’

‘Ha! You are insolent? We will see how far an Aberdeen terrier can swim.’ The German burst into a guffaw at his own humour, and turned to the Little Bird. ‘What regiments are in Gibraltar, old rascal?’

The Catalan took his cigarette from his lips, and bowed. ‘I am the Scotsman’s friend, *señor comandante*.’

The Hun stamped on the steel deck. ‘Understand, fool, if you do not answer, you die. Answer truthfully, and you shall live—on the word of a Prussian officer.’

‘*Señor comandante*, I find the security insufficient.’

‘*Pajarillo mio*,’ said Bruce in the Catalan dialect, ‘you are a loyal man, but you are not British. Save yourself if you will.’

‘*Señor*,’ the old man answered, ‘I have served with you for British gold and for private vengeance. Let them drown me as they drowned my brother Pedro. It is better to die a man than to live a traitor.’

The two men clasped hands.

‘The water is warm at this time of year,’ said the German. ‘We will see whether

the Spanish smuggler or the Scotch terrier can swim the longer. I am going to submerge.' He shouted a harsh order to his men, and followed them below with a cruel smile. The water-tight door slid to behind them.

'Courage, Señor Bruce!' said the Catalan. 'Never say die till you are dead. Slip your arms into this.' He pulled out a contrivance of india-rubber, and began to slip it over his companion's arm as the U-boat settled lower.

'Never!' Bruce jerked himself free. 'Put it on yourself. Quick!'

The water was almost up to the deck.

'We shall tear it if we struggle. You are young; I am old. Put it on.'

'Never! In God's name, put it on!'

'*Vaya!* I will.'

The Spaniard slipped his arms swiftly into the places provided, and putting his lips to a valve, blew hard. The water swirled about their legs. It was up to their middle. It swept them off their feet. They were swimming for their lives in the eddy left by the vanished submarine.

But the Little Bird had blown just enough air into the safety-waistcoat before the deck left them unsupported. Both men were strong swimmers,

‘Keep yourself going for a minute, señor,’ said Pajarillo. ‘The more air I can blow into this affair, the more it will help us.’ He blew till his brown face was red, and he gasped for breath, resting on the water.

‘That is better!’ said he. ‘If Gibraltar lost us our ship, it has perhaps saved us our lives. I saw this in a shop in the Ramp Santa Caterina. We will wear it in turn, and perhaps we shall be picked up!’

All that brave men could do they did, changing their frail support from time to time as one or the other grew weary. But it was a desperate chance at the best, and they knew it. The sparkling waves mocked the agony of their struggle, waiting till exhaustion should yield them an easy prey.

A couple of hours passed, and they were still afloat, their lungs toiling, their hearts breaking with the strain. Bruce, who was wearing the waistcoat now, realised that the end was at hand.

‘Take it,’ he gasped. ‘God save you! I am done.’

‘Fight!’ came the panting reply. ‘A ship! Fight!’

But the younger man struggled no more. The blue waves rolled over him. For him the fight was over.

II.

Had he died? Was this the awakening from death? He suffered exquisite pain. He was conscious dimly of a face—a most lovely face—which looked into his own. Slowly, between swooning and waking, he took in details of the watching face—black eyes shadowed with black lashes, black eye-brows beautifully arched, a pure ivory skin, masses of glossy black hair, red lips half-parted in a smile of triumph, and little teeth so white, so smooth, so sharp!

The face turned from him, and he heard words in a strange tongue. Something was put to his lips, and life coursed through his veins. The face bent over him again, and the voice he had heard spoke to him. ‘Do you speak English?’

His own voice would not come, but he tried to move his head.

‘I have saved you, my handsome Englishman,’ said the face—‘you and your companion.’

When, after a long sleep, Bruce awoke, Pajarillo was sitting beside his bunk. There was an odour of cigarette-smoke in the little white cabin.

‘Good-evening, Señor Bruce,’ said the Little Bird. ‘As you see, we are saved.’

‘Where are we?’ asked the Scot. ‘I dreamed, Pajarillo. There was a face—a dark, beautiful face.’

‘Oh, *là-là!*’ The Catalan smiled. ‘Young men always dream of beautiful faces. But indeed your dream was true. And it is Captain Carlotta herself who has saved us.’

‘Captain Carlotta?’

‘You never heard of her?’

‘Never.’

‘But she is famous, my friend, in the Mediterranean. She is a Sicilian, a heroine of romance. She served her apprenticeship at sea—dressed as a boy, they say, much of the time. And one day she passed her examination under the Italian authorities, and was given the command of a ship. ’Tis said there are few better sailors than she in Italy.’

Donald Bruce sat up. The Little Bird helped him out of the bunk, where he had lain rolled in blankets, and gave him his clothes, already dried. Bruce took some food that was placed beside the bunk, and accompanied the Little Bird on deck. The ship, a steamer of some three thousand tons, was running eastwards into the eye of a golden sunrise.

An officer came out of the charthouse just

below the bridge. An officer—yes; but the officer was a woman. Her face was that which Bruce had seen in his moment of returning life. The black masses of her hair escaped a little round the white cap with gold braid which she wore. Gold braid and gold buttons adorned her white uniform, in which a short skirt took the place of trousers; and her feet were encased in neat brown boots, surmounted by tight-laced gaiters.

She smiled as she came forward, showing the little, white, sharp teeth. ‘You are better now?’ The English words were spoken with just a pleasant accent of strangeness.

Bruce took the small, shapely brown hand that was extended, and on the moment’s impulse kissed it. A man’s emotions are a little out of hand when he has just been rescued from almost certain death.

‘Captain Carlotta, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts!’ Feeble enough words, he felt.

‘Rather thank the good God who gave you strong arms to swim, and strong hearts not to despair,’ answered the girl—she was little more. ‘Your big friend here, whose speech we cannot understand much, was at his last gasp, but he was keeping your head out of the water. He is a proper man!’

‘He is indeed a loyal comrade, signorina. May I ask whither we are bound?’

‘To Naples, the city of light and love, Signor Inglese, unless we are unfortunate with the submarine which has been following us these last twelve hours past—the same, I fancy, which sank your ship.’

‘Following you?’ Bruce stared at the composure with which she made the remark, as if to be followed by a deadly shark-ship were the most ordinary thing.

The white teeth showed again. ‘We have fired at them twice. They do not understand us very well, but they are very determined. Well, we shall see! Signore, a man like you should be in a fine uniform. Why are you not?’

The Scot flushed furiously. ‘Signorina, you have saved our lives, and you have the right to ask. I am in the service of M’Ilroy, M’Ilroy, and M’Allister, a firm of some repute in Spain and London. I had some special knowledge of the Spanish seaports, and my employers considered I could best serve the cause for which we all fight by remaining for the present in their employ, though in a different capacity. Thanks to their liberality, my friend here, who has his own reasons for hating the Huns, has been associated with me

for the past six months in a little amateur campaign against the U-boats. Signorina, up to the present fortune has stood by us, and we have been the means of bringing to destruction four of these ships, and of causing grave inconvenience and annoyance to several others. I assure you we have done our best.'

A ripple of laughter came from the red lips. The black eyes flashed, and the small brown hand shot out. 'I greet a good comrade! The good God must have meant to bring us together. The same words with which you have described your labours, *caro signore mio*, would precisely describe my own during the same period. Come here, both of you!'

She led the way into the chartroom. Screwed on the table was a dial, very similar to that of a compass, save that this had a double ring of figures. The inner circle corresponded to the ordinary points of the compass; the outer was marked in kilometres and fractions of kilometres. The dial had two pointers. At the moment the shorter one pointed to W.N.W., and the longer indicated six kilometres. The hands moved slowly as they watched, swinging slightly forward and backward from the points named.

Captain Carlotta lit a cigarette, and smiled at the young Scot. 'When this little instrument has sunk ten U-boats I have promised to marry my lover, who has invented it. He has set it to run for twenty thousand kilometres, but he keeps the secret of its power locked in his brain. On the day he marries me, he will offer the secret to the Italian Government, and the Kaiser will have to think of a new frightfulness.'

Bruce translated this to Pajarillo, and the two men gazed with an intense interest at the little dial, from which a wire ran down under the table through the chartroom floor.

Bruce looked up at the beautiful dark face of the girl-captain. 'Pardon, signorina; why not offer it to your Government at once?'

'I will tell you. My lover is an Anarchist. A foolish fellow—yes, but clever as the devil. If he were not my lover, nothing would make him offer his invention to any Government in the world. He does not believe in government. But he submits to mine!' The red lips laughed again. 'Pietro was a bank clerk. He invented this to amuse himself, but he refused to do anything with it. Then I said, if he did not fight for Italy himself, and give me his machine to try against our enemies, I would never speak to him again. He raved,

and stormed, and pleaded; he threw himself on his knees. But he was very much in love, so I had him in my hands.' She opened and shut her little brown hands dramatically. 'And now he is doing penance for his anarchism on the mine-sweeper *Elenetta*, while I am experimenting with his invention. I assure you it is very bad for the Boches.'

Bruce started. 'Did you say the *Elenetta* ?'

'But certainly.'

'Do you love this Pietro, signorina ?'

The black eyes gave him a strange glance.

'One serves one's country, Signor Inglese.'

Bruce spoke to the Little Bird in Spanish. The old Catalan, with a puzzled frown, stood contemplating the young Sicilian woman.

'Tell her,' he said curtly.

'On our way to Málaga, signorina, we were convoyed into Gibraltar by a British cruiser. While we lay there, the news came in that an Italian mine-sweeper, the *Elenetta*, had been sunk in the Strait by a U-boat, and that all hands were lost. One man, who died after rescue, said the German crew leaned over for some minutes, and laughed as they watched the men drown.'

Bruce watched the dark, lovely face as he dealt this blow. It did not change colour, but a new gleam came into the black eyes.

‘Pietro was a poor kind of man,’ she said deliberately. ‘But it was I who made him go to sea. And it is I who will avenge him. Oh, Sant’ Iddio, I will avenge him well!’

III.

Captain Carlotta glanced at the dial, took up a speaking-tube which lay beside it, and gave an order to the wheelhouse above. The ship immediately began to swing round in a wide arc. She picked up her own wake, and went back along it at full speed. Captain Carlotta sat down at the table, watching the dial, and from time to time taking the cigarette from her lips to give an order through the tube. Presently she threw away the cigarette, and spoke through a telephone. ‘That is for the gunners. There will be fighting soon,’ she calmly announced. Now into the speaking-tube, now into the telephone, she spoke with curt, terse phrases as the hands swung on the dial, and the steamer swung this way or that to her order.

With a suddenness which made the two rescued men start, a gun roared from the vessel’s deck, shaking her from stem to stern. Captain Carlotta looked up with a gleam of the white teeth.

‘Missed!’ said she, pointing to the dial.

‘But we frightened him. He is running away.’ The dial-fingers were in steady movement. ‘But he is only two kilometres away, and if he dives, we are the faster ship. Yes, he has dived! *Ebbene*, we shall be nearer when he comes up.’

‘Santiago! it is good hunting, Señor Bruce!’ muttered Pajarillo. ‘What is it she says?’

Bruce, in a low tone, informed him.

The Catalan clicked his tongue. ‘*Maria purísima!* what a woman!’

‘Seven hundred metres,’ said Captain Carlotta without looking from the dial. ‘The German is uneasy. He goes very slowly now. Oh, you were clever, my poor Pietro! Presently the Boche will come up to look for us, and, if God is good, we shall ram him.’

A slight frown of deep attention puckered the smooth forehead as she pored over the terrible dial. The black eyes burned beneath their long lashes, but the slim brown fingers which held the telephone and the tube showed not the faintest tremor. For a tense ten minutes they waited thus, the ship’s engines slowly throbbing, and the dial-pointers almost stationary.

Then a terrific report like a thunder-clap

crashed in their ears, followed instantly by another shattering roar from the steamer's gun. There was a confusion of noises on deck, and the shock of heavy falls. But Captain Carlotta never lifted her black eyes from the dial. She shouted an order through the tube, and the throbbing engines accelerated swiftly.

'Hold tight!' cried the girl, and grasped the arms of her fixed chair.

Too late the caution. There was a rending beneath their feet, and Bruce and the Catalan were flung to the floor.

The girl-captain sprang up and ran out, and they picked themselves up and followed.

The deck was littered with smashed gear, and spattered with blood. Half-a-dozen stricken men lay scattered about, and a boat hung loose from one davit. The Huns must have been wonderfully quick in emerging and bringing their gun into action; but they had paid dear for the damage. Just astern the steamer a strange body, like a monstrous buoy, was swaying in the waves. It was the U-boat, completely up-ended, and on the portion thus sticking out of the water a number of men were clinging. Others were swimming in the sea. Even as Captain Carlotta rang to stop the steamer's engines, the remaining portion

of the submarine slowly sank from view, and presently there were only swimming survivors, little black dots upon a sea all filmed with oil and alive with sickly bubbles.

‘Rammed, *por Dios!*’ the old Catalan shouted with exultation.

The Scot nodded, awaiting developments.

A boat was lowered, and on the captain’s order a coil of stout cord was placed in her. Every rescued man, as he was taken from the sea, was at once bound fast with his arms to his sides, and thus bound they were brought aboard the steamer and ranged in line, a soaked and sullen crowd of a dozen men, including the Hun commander.

The Little Bird laid on Bruce’s shoulder a hand which shook with excitement. ‘Look you, señor—the very same villain who sailed away from under our feet and left us to struggle to our death!’

‘“To every pig his Martinmas,”’ said Bruce, grimly quoting the Spanish proverb.

Captain Carlotta stepped forward and addressed the prisoners in English, the *lingua Franca* of the sea. The beautiful dark face was ominously calm.

‘Pirates and murderers, how many ships have you sunk?’

The Hun commander stared at the girlish

figure. 'Who asks?' he demanded insolently.

'How many ships?' repeated the girl-captain, setting her lips under his stare.

'A ship for every year that you have lived, pretty captain.'

'And merchant-ships, and passenger-ships, how many?'

'Enough to win this, *bella signorina mia*.' With an odious leer, the German pointed to the Iron Cross pinned to the breast of his wet uniform.

'And the *Elenetta*?'

'That was two days ago. But how did you know? There were no survivors.'

'And of all those ships, how many prisoners did you take?'

'Prisoners? My ship, pretty captain, is not a prison, or a lifeboat.'

'Nor is mine,' answered Carlotta. She gave an order in her own tongue, and half-a-dozen sailors swarmed into the steel shrouds of the steamer. In a few minutes, on either side of the ship's foremast, a festoon of nooses swung, each cord hitched a couple of feet higher than the one below it.

A look of ghastly fear came into the faces of the sea-murderers. The commander of the U-boat sought to brazen it out

‘Signorina, I have always understood that the seamen of Italy are chivalrous to a beaten foe.’ He bowed.

‘I am not an Italian,’ she replied coldly. ‘I am a Sicilian. And I am not a seaman, but a sea-woman. And you have killed the man who was my lover.’

‘What I have done has been done by order. It is war. I am not to blame.’

‘And what my men here will do will be done by order—my order. They are not to blame.’

‘Signorina, what will you do?’

‘I will execute a batch of murderers.’

‘*Gott im Himmel!*’ The Hun stepped forward. ‘It is monstrous! It is contrary to the usages of war.’

‘We are not talking of war; we are talking of murder,’ said Captain Carlotta. She gave an order in a level voice. The first of the Germans was seized, led struggling to a noose, and next minute was kicking in mid-air.

The German commander, fast held by two Italians, was beside himself with terror and dismay.

‘In the name of civilisation, I protest!’ he cried. ‘I am a Prussian officer.’

‘Since you are a Prussian officer,’ answered

the girl, 'you shall have the privilege of your rank. You shall hang last and highest.'

'It is murder!' screamed the wretched man.

In pairs the Germans were led forward on either side of the mast, and swung into the air. Bruce, sickening at the sight, stepped forward. 'Captain Carlotta'—— he began.

She faced him with flaming eyes, and pointed imperiously. 'Go below, Englishman! The English are too sentimental. This is vendetta. Go below!'

'But hear me!'

'Afterwards. Go below!' She stamped her small foot, and ere he could say more he was seized by two Italians and taken below. Pajarillo remained on deck, watching the grim spectacle with an impenetrable face.

It was evening when Bruce was permitted to return on deck. The foremast shrouds were festooned with a ghastly line of corpses. The Little Bird, sitting on the bottom step of the bridge ladder, was watching them dangle in the air as he gravely smoked a cigarette.

'Pajarillo, where is the captain?' asked the Scot.

'At dinner,' answered the Catalan. 'She invites us to join her; but I do not feel very hungry, Señor Bruce.'

‘Nor do I,’ said Bruce. ‘What a woman, Little Bird!’

‘She is going to sail into Naples like this,’ said Pajarillo, nodding at the swinging bodies. ‘It will give the Neapolitans something to talk about. And to think, after all, that she did not love this Pietro! *Hombre!* To my thinking it is yourself who is more to her fancy, Señor Bruce.’

‘God forbid!’ said the Scot fervently.

‘Why so, señor? If I were of your age—*hombre!*’ The old adventurer flicked the ash from his cigarette, and nodded again towards the swaying corpses. ‘That is justice—good justice,’ he continued. ‘She and I are of the South, and I understand. But you are of the North. The North is too cold to understand.’

‘“Too sentimental,” she said.’

The Catalan nodded. ‘You have no volcanoes in England. There is a great deal in geography, Señor Bruce.’

THE HOUSE OF THE SPY.

I.

‘LITTLE BIRD, who would suppose, sitting here, that the world was convulsed with war?’

‘Things are not what they seem, Señor Bruce,’ said the Spaniard, puffing meditatively at a cigar.

The younger man’s eyes were dreaming, as well a young man’s eyes might, for the sight they looked on was the lovely blue expanse of the Bay of Naples, whose beauties have lured the poets and the lovers of all ages since the birth of history.

‘You are a cynical fellow, Pajarillo *mio*,’ said the Scot. ‘Nevertheless, things are sometimes what they seem. You and I have lived wildly of late, and if this spot seems to me a foretaste of paradise, you will not easily convince me that it is otherwise.’

The rose pergola which led down from the terraced rock-gardens of the villa behind them to the stone seat where they sat by the blue water filled the sunny corner with its fragrance. Bees droned in the scented air. Tiny lizards, flashing green and gold, hurried about among

the rocky crevices. Steps cut in the rock led down into the water—water so clear and sparkling in the morning sun that one could see the fish flash past. A hundred yards from the shore a stout man was rowing himself slowly along in a little white boat, in which he had pulled from a small sailing-yacht that lay daintily at anchor about half-a-mile away.

The mobile mouth of the Catalan twisted itself into a queer smile. ‘The priests say, Señor Bruce, that even in the Garden of Eden there was a serpent. Do you see that man in the boat?’

‘Of course. It is Monsieur Polinski, the rich Russian, who has turned his villa yonder into a convalescent hospital for wounded Italian officers.’

‘So I have heard.’ The Little Bird sat watching the oarsman.

The rocky coast at this point looped itself into a picturesque cove. On the one point of the cove was the garden of the Villa Tosti, in which the two men were sitting. On the other point rose a stately castellated villa, over which, from a flagstaff rising from the white roof, floated the Red Cross flag.

‘Ever since we have been here,’ said the Little Bird presently, ‘I have been wondering what Monsieur Polinski is doing in that villa,

because I have seen Monsieur Polinski before, and his name was not Monsieur Polinski then.'

'What do you mean, Pajarillo?'

The Catalan turned his head, and the dark eyes looked into his companion's face. 'You and I are honest men, Señor Bruce,' said he. 'You are an Englishman, seeking in your own way to destroy the German shark-ships because they are the enemies of your country. I am a *contrabandista* who is trying to help you, because those accursed pirates drowned my poor brother, sailing in a peaceful Spanish ship. And if your honourable firm have undertaken to pay me certain moneys for my help, that is between them and me. But this Monsieur Polinski! Ten years ago he was living in Barcelona, and then he called himself a Greek, with a name as long as my arm. What he was doing in Barcelona the good God knows, and perhaps some others not so good. For it was a time of revolution, my friend, and Monsieur Polinski grew rich and fat.'

'You mean he is a spy! But what could a spy do in Naples?'

'*Valgame Dios!* How should I know? I am a Spaniard, and Spain is a neutral country. I wish this court of inquiry was over, and they

would let me go back to my wife and family. Señor Bruce, it is six months since you and I set forth on our adventures. I grow home-sick.'

Donald Bruce smiled. Pablo Pajarillo's constant talk of home-sickness always amused him, for, though he did not altogether disbelieve it, there was something incongruous about home-sickness in one who, of all the men he had known, seemed to have the most ardent love of adventure for its own sake. It was only a fortnight since he and Pajarillo had been torpedoed almost in sight of port, and rescued by Captain Carlotta. The Italian vessel had actually sailed into Naples with what was left of the U-boat crew hanging by their necks in a ghastly festoon of corpses on either side the foremast. It was the court of inquiry into this strange business that was keeping the two friends in the pleasant villa by the sea, where they had been lodged with a very courteous Government official, and where they enjoyed the completest liberty of action and a generous hospitality.

'Gentlemen, it is time to go to the court.'

It was their host who called them, standing under the rose pergola.

'Say nothing of Monsieur Polinski!' said the Little Bird, as they rose to follow.

As the car swung along the dusty road round the lovely bay, Donald Bruce sat thinking of his companion's words, and again asking himself the question, What could a spy do in Naples? He had met this Monsieur Polinski—in fact, he had been introduced to him by Signor Tosti, their host—and had found him most entertaining, a man of the world, well read, speaking fluent English, and full, apparently, of enthusiasm for the war and sympathy for its victims. He was on excellent terms with his guests, the wounded officers, whom he entertained with the most lavish liberality, taking them drives in his car, and sailing with them on the bay within the narrow limits permitted by the authorities. On all sides the man was spoken of with respect, and even with admiration. Was it possible that all this could be a cloak for villainy; that by worming himself into the confidence of his soldier guests the man might be obtaining secrets of military importance and communicating information useful to the enemy?

On their way home in the evening they passed Monsieur Polinski's car at a cross-road near the city. It was standing at the roadside, and Monsieur Polinski, who had several officers with him, was carrying to them with

his own hands glasses of iced wine from a hostelry close by.

Turning his head as their own car passed, Donald Bruce saw Monsieur Polinski in conversation with the waiter of the inn, who had accompanied him into the road. The waiter had an evil-looking face. Bruce noted the fact, though it stood for nothing. Many waiters, like many other folk, labour under the disadvantage of an uninviting physiognomy.

After dinner that evening the household of Signor Tosti took the air, as their custom was, in their pleasant seaside garden. The garden sloped in terraces towards the water. It was a still summer night, very quiet, very warm, and very dark over the bay, save when from time to time the mysterious long beam of a searchlight swept the coast-line and the sea. The wavelets, as they broke along the rocky shore, were bright with green phosphorescence. The pale-green sparks glowed wherever the fish leaped or a tiny wavelet splashed. No lights but the darting searchlights showed along the shore. On the opposite bluff of the little cove the Villa Polinski stood, a black outline against the night sky. Between the two bluffs which bounded the cove, and a little farther out than either, was a little pale

speck where Monsieur Polinski's white yacht lay at anchor.

It suddenly struck the young Scot as a curious thing that the spot where the boat was moored was never swept by the search-lights. Some accident of shadow from the coastwise rocks kept it unilluminated, though now and again the questing ray caught the topmast, making it shine in a strange, ghostly isolation.

II.

Last thing before turning in, Bruce went and sat for a few minutes on the seat by the water-side where he had talked with Pajarillo in the morning. He sat and thought of the future. Like his companion, he was anxious for this court of inquiry to end, but for a different reason. The Catalan, his vendetta satisfied, his fortune made by the success which had attended their joint adventures, wished to get back to peace, and enjoy the fruits which this curious partnership had brought him. The Scot, on the other hand, was conscious of an ever-increasing hankering to join one or other of the recognised forces of his country in the great contest with her enemies. In the Canaries he had learned to fly. The sea had given him adventure and

danger in plenty, but the fascination of the air was upon him. He would fight for his country in the great spaces of the sky. He would be one of that magnificent brotherhood of daring youth who, like the gods of old, rode over the smoke of battle on the wings of the wind. He was a hard-headed, practical fellow, but there was a touch of poetry in his Northern blood too, and the terrible glory of the airman's work drew him with a magic spell.

What was that? He started up, his dreams gone in a moment, his faculties intent.

At the foot of the rocks below the Villa Polinski a straight green flash of phosphorescence glowed, sparkled, and vanished into nothingness; or, rather, it seemed to vanish into the very body of the rocks themselves. It was not the phosphorescence of a breaking wave—there were no waves breaking in the still water beneath those rocks. Bruce watched, but the flash did not reappear. Had it been a trick of the eyes? He knew it had not. It had been too straight and regular, a clear line of faint but definite green, pencilled out from the rocks towards the sea, shortening itself gradually till its disappearance into the rock. What could have caused it?

The Scot sat thinking; but thinking brought

no answer, and he went to bed. The Little Bird and Bruce shared a room which gave on to a balcony, from which steps descended to the garden—a pleasant room, fragrant with the scent of Southern flowers which blew in at the open French windows.

No night could have been more restful, yet Bruce could not sleep. He lay thinking of the many things which had happened to him since he had left Spain with Pablo Pajarillo—of the war, of the man Polinski, of his own prospects as an aviator, of the terrible Sicilian woman-captain who had brought them so strangely to Naples. A hundred memories jostled each other in his restless brain. He grew hot and irritable with himself, and with the Spanish companion whose breathing came so regularly from the other bed.

A clock in the villa struck two. Bruce abandoned all thought of sleep that night, and slipping out of bed, crossed the room barefoot to the open window, and stood a moment gazing out into the warm night, silent save for the faint splash of the wavelets.

‘Where are you going, my friend?’ The Catalan had not been too fast asleep to awake at the slight movement.

‘I am going for a swim. I cannot sleep, Little Bird.’

‘*Bueno!* It will refresh you. Do not swim too far.’

Bruce took a towel over his arm, and went down the garden as he was, in his pyjamas, barefoot, silent as a shadow. Through the scented rose pergola he came to the water-side, stripped, and waded in, careful to make no splash which might arouse the suspicions of a watchman. The soft Southern night was lit only by the sparkling stars. As he struck out in the almost tepid water, Bruce told himself he would swim as far as Monsieur Polinski’s yacht and back. He was a strong swimmer, and the distance was well within his powers.

He reached the yacht in comfort, resisted the temptation to climb aboard for a header lest he should arouse suspicion, and hung on to the mooring-rope to rest himself before returning.

As he held on, treading the water, his foot came in contact with a line stretched taut beneath the water, at right angles with the mooring-chain. Wondering not a little what this could be, he felt about with his foot, and made the additional discovery that the taut line was double, a second rope, equally taut, being stretched within a few inches of the other. Bruce traced the two lines with his

foot to their junction with the mooring-chain, and what he felt there spurred him to further inquiry. Taking a long breath, he gripped the mooring-chain well below the surface, and hand-over-hand drew himself down to the point of connection. Then his hands confirmed what his feet had already suggested. The two ropes—or, rather, the single rope which he discovered them to be—passed round a running-block, firmly attached to the mooring-chain at a point some five feet below the mooring-buoy. The direction of the double line ran straight towards the rocks above which the Villa Polinski was built. Bruce let go, and came to the surface to digest this remarkable discovery.

As his head emerged from the water, he was startled to find himself no longer alone. Another swimmer was supporting himself by the mooring-rope. A whisper reached him. ‘St! It is I, Pajarillo!’

‘Why have you come here, Little Bird?’

‘I thought—excuse me—young men are venturesome—I thought you might swim too far.’

Bruce was touched by the Catalan’s devotion. He laid a hand on his companion’s wet shoulder. ‘Pajarillo *mio*, there is queer matter here.’ He told in a whisper what he

had discovered, and by an afterthought added what he had seen before retiring—the strange green flash beneath the rocks.

‘Ha!’ The Spaniard’s eyes gleamed in the darkness. ‘Can you swim as far as the rocks yonder, Señor Bruce?’

‘There, and back again, if need be.’

‘Then, come. It will perhaps be interesting. I’ll wager this line runs right up to the rocks. Swim silently, my friend!’

With slow, sweeping breast-strokes the two struck out for the rocks. From time to time they stopped and trod water, seeking the line, but without feeling it.

‘Patience,’ said the Spaniard. ‘It will sag in the middle. We shall perhaps find it as we approach the land.’

And so indeed it proved. Fifty yards from the coast rocks their feet again touched the line. It led straight to the rocks, where, coming almost to the surface, it disappeared into an opening too small to be called a cave, one of many little cavities eaten by the action of the water in the low, overhanging cliff.

‘Where a line can go, perhaps a man might follow,’ whispered the Little Bird. ‘How say you? Shall we try?’

For answer Bruce struck forward silently

into the black mouth of the rock. Scarcely had he left the open water, when he felt the line within an inch or two of the surface, and seizing it with one hand, took counsel with his companion.

‘*Valgame Dios!*’ muttered Pajarillo. ‘I do not like this place. It is as black as hell’s mouth, and cold—*hombre!* it is cold as the grave!’

‘While we have the line we shall not drown, *compañero*. Will you come farther?’

‘Plague on this Polinski! If it were not so cold, it would be amusing to learn what devil’s trick he has here.’

‘Come,’ said Bruce. He drew himself forward along the line.

III.

They had gone but a little way, when the inky blackness of the rock-passage began to lighten. Bruce, who was in front, suddenly stopped, and stretching out his hand, gave a warning grip to the arm of his companion close behind. Cautiously the two men worked themselves a few feet farther along the line, till they could see round a projecting mass of rock.

A low cavern, whose irregular roof varied from ten to twenty feet above the black sur-

face of the water, opened before them. It was perhaps forty feet long. The only light which relieved its blackness came from an oil-lamp standing on a block of stone at the farther end, immediately at the foot of a wooden step-ladder which descended from a hole in the cavern's roof. In the glow of the lantern two men were standing with a barrel-shaped case between them. One of the men was Monsieur Polinski; the other Bruce recognised with a start as the waiter of the roadside inn. What was in the barrel the two swimmers were too far off to see; but whatever it was, Polinski appeared to be giving careful instructions about it to the other man, who was following his remarks with the closest attention, nodding his head, and from time to time putting questions which the other answered. The men's words could not be distinguished, for, though the distance was not great, the faint movement of the water in the cavern made a murmurous whisper round the cavern walls.

Monsieur Polinski emptied the barrel of its contents, taking out a number of small dark objects, and laying them in a handbag beside the lamp. When the bag seemed full, he took it with him up the ladder and disappeared. A minute later he called out from

above, and his companion followed him up the ladder. There was no sound in the cavern save the mysterious sighing of the imprisoned water.

‘Little Bird, it is now or never!’ whispered Bruce. ‘Come!’

‘Hold!’ muttered the Catalan. ‘It is easier to get into a trap than out of it, my friend. My blood is getting chilled.’

But the Scot was already swimming swiftly towards the light. A flat tongue of rock running down into the water made a natural landing-place near the foot of the ladder. Bruce, shivering, crept out of the water, followed by Pajarillo, and found that a trap-door at the top of the ladder led into a lighted space. But as to what might be above them they had no time to conjecture. There was enough in the cavern to claim their full attention. A number of the dark blocks were still lying near the lamp. At first sight they had the appearance of irregular lumps of coal.

Pajarillo took one in his hand and turned it over. ‘Bombs!’ he whispered. He pointed excitedly to the barrel-shaped case. It was a water-tight box, provided on the outside with powerful clip springs. A single glance sufficed to show how the case could be clipped in a moment on to a cable, while a

small capstan with a grooved wheel near by explained the rest.

The Little Bird was still standing staring at the deadly thing in his hand, when a noise from above sent the two friends hurrying for concealment to the deep shadow cast by the block on which the lamp stood. They heard the sound of some one descending the ladder, and a voice which called upstairs. Then, in full view of both of them, the waiter from the wayside inn moved out, carrying the water-tight case, and clipped the springs on to the cable of the capstan. He began to turn the windlass, and the double line of cable commenced to move, bearing the case away towards the water.

Monsieur Polinski had not this time followed down the ladder. As the case neared the water, the man's eyes, following its course away from the glow of the lamp, suddenly met the eyes of the two men watching him in the shadow.

The apparition of the two naked figures crouching silently in that eerie place must have been a powerful shock to his nerves. The fellow's jaw dropped. His black eyes bulged with terror. His hands left the windlass-handle and fell nerveless to his sides.

‘Swim!’ panted the Little Bird in his young companion’s ear. Next moment, before the panic-stricken man at the windlass could give voice to his terror, Pajarillo’s hairy arm shot out, seized the lantern, and flung it blazing in the face of the waiter.

A shriek of agonised fear rang through the hollow depths of the cavern. Pajarillo, following up his throw, hurled himself full upon the terrified wretch, and with a mighty splash they rolled into the water together.

An Egyptian darkness filled the cave. The water plashed and gurgled round the unseen walls of rock. No cry followed that first wild cry, but the gurgling and sighing of the water in that subterranean hole was like a dreadful nightmare.

Bruce, swimming for the entrance in obedience to his companion’s desperate whisper, nearly gave way to unreasoning panic when the light disappeared and left him without guidance or the sense of direction. Good swimmer as he was, he began to gasp, but at that very moment his hand touched the cable, just awash, and the contact restored his manhood. He felt his way along the line to the entrance-gulley, and hung there with a beating heart.

A minute later a faint light showed far off,

coming from the trap-door in the roof. A man's voice was heard calling doubtfully down. Between the faint light and himself Bruce saw something black on the surface of the water near him.

‘Is it you, Little Bird?’ he panted.

‘Yes, yes! It is I! Swim, swim! We must get out. Have you the line?’

‘Yes; have you?’

‘God be praised, I have! Swim!’

They struck out through the culvert-like entrance, and presently the sweet night-air breathed about them. At the outer side of the entrance the companions clung for a minute to the submerged cable to recover their breath.

‘*Madre de Dios!*’ gasped Pajarillo; ‘that was a close call, Señor Bruce. Can you swim back now to the villa?’

‘Yes.’

‘Then, swim.’

They struck out side by side. It was a hard swim after their experience in the cave, but the water was warm out here in the soft Southern night. They reached the shore safely, and crept back to their room on the veranda. The Little Bird laid something hard on the dressing-table.

‘What is that?’ asked Bruce.

‘That is a bomb, my friend. To-morrow we will take it to Naples.’

‘Suppose that fellow recognised you, Pajarillo?’

‘What then?’ asked the big Catalan. ‘It is certain that he will not see me again. No, *por Dios!* nor will he see any one else either. It was my life or his, and, as you see, I am alive, señor.’

IV.

Two days later, at breakfast at the villa, Signora Tosti was full of great news.

‘Have you heard,’ said she excitedly, ‘the authorities have discovered a great plot? You know Monsieur Polinski?’

Bruce set down his coffee. ‘Is he not the rich humanitarian gentleman who gives his villa for the wounded officers, signora?’

‘The humanitarian gentleman!’ The lady’s handsome features expressed a fine scorn. ‘Signori, this humanitarian gentleman was last night shot for a spy! Oh, it is quite true. My husband is in the Government service. He hears many things that are not known to all. What do you think? This Polinski, this humanitarian gentleman, had perfected a system by which he obtained bombs from German submarines, made like lumps of coal.

He had agents in the port who worked disguised as coal-heavers. I assure you it is true. My husband is a Government official, and swears he has himself seen the bombs which the police seized at this villain's house. The agents obtained the bombs from Polinski, and placed them in the bunkers of outgoing ships so that they were indistinguishable from the coal they lay among. And then, when the stokers put them in the furnaces, boum ! and another brave ship was lost to the Allies. Have we not all heard of ships which have sailed from Naples, and been mysteriously blown up at sea ? Eh, but these Germans are cunning savages ! But, thanks be to God, our secret service does not sleep ! It has good ears and sharp eyes, and a long, long arm !'

Donald Bruce smiled and raised his coffee-cup. 'Signora, I drink success to the secret service, and confusion to all plotters and spies ! And if you will give me another cup of this excellent coffee, I should like to drink the same health again.'

'Pass your cup, signore,' said the lady.

THE GOLDEN SNUFF-BOX.

I.

AND to think that in two hours you will be in Spain !'

The man raised his eyes wistfully towards the distant summits of the Pyrenees. There was a note in his voice to which the heart of Donald Bruce, himself an exile from his own colder, Northern land, responded sympathetically.

'Why,' asked Bruce, 'do you not visit your country, now that you are so near?'

The man clenched his hands. 'Oh, señor, if I only could !' He had broken into Spanish now, though all the way down from Montpellier he had persisted in speaking English—and execrable English—notwithstanding that Bruce spoke Spanish like a native. 'If I only could !' he repeated. 'But I am a Carlist. The name of Brieto is proscribed in Spain. Yet I must torture myself sometimes by coming here, where I have relatives, to gaze from afar on the mountains of my country !'

Bruce said nothing ; and the other, standing on the open platform beside the train, studying the young Scot's face, seemed to have some-

thing on his mind. 'Señor,' he said at last, 'we have known each other but a few hours, and that only as casual fellow-travellers. But it has been my experience that Englishmen are men of honour. Have I your permission to ask a favour?'

'If I can serve you in anything, pray inform me.'

'Some would call me rash,' said Brieto. He drew something from his pocket—a small gold box like an old-fashioned snuff-box, exquisitely chased. 'I have a cousin, señor, who lives in Andorra, at the Inn of the Six Curarts.* His name is Andrea Maquin. My father, an exile like myself, has recently died. He left this trinket, of some family interest, to my cousin. I had intended sending it by post, but in these unhappy days the international post is very insecure. The parcel would certainly be opened by the French authorities, and the trinket is of value. If it could be posted in Spain, there would be a greater chance of my cousin receiving it safely.'

Bruce hesitated.

'Pray examine it,' said Brieto. 'I assure you there is nothing contraband in my poor father's snuff-box.' He opened the box, which was quite empty, and handed it to the Scot,

* Andorra is divided into six curarts or communes

who looked at it with curiosity and admiration.

‘This is a very beautiful and valuable thing,’ Bruce said. ‘You repose great confidence in a stranger, señor.’

‘I am reposing confidence in the honour of an Englishman.’

‘If you desire it, I will take your box and post it, Señor Brieto. Let me give you a receipt for it.’

The Spaniard made a gesture of impatience. ‘What is the use of a receipt? If you are an honest man, it is needless. If you were not, how would a receipt bring my box back? The train is starting, *con Dios*, Señor Bruce!’

The train drew out for Spain, with the gold box in the Scotsman’s hands. He turned to his travelling-companion, and, with a smile, held out the trinket. ‘What think you, Little Bird? I must have a face of extraordinary honesty.’

Pablo el Pajarillo took the box in his hands and shrugged his big shoulders. ‘As for your face, Señor Bruce, I have nothing to say against it; but had I a toy like this, I should not entrust it to the first stranger.’ He examined the box, and shook his grey head. ‘Stolen, I should say.’

‘*Hombre!* I never thought of that. What a fool!’

As Bruce took back the box it slipped through his fingers and fell with a crash on the brass fittings of the compartment. With an exclamation of dismay, he picked it up, and looked to see if it had been damaged.

‘*Pablo mio*, come here, quick!’

The chased gold lid had sprung open with the jolt, but instead of opening as before in a single piece, the lid revealed itself to be duplicate. In the interstice between the two metal plates was a piece of thin Indian paper, the whole of one side of which was covered with very small angular writing. The penmanship was fine, but not a letter could Bruce make out. The script ran from right to left, from which he guessed it to be in some Eastern language. ‘What do you make of it, Little Bird?’

The Catalan frowned. ‘Spy work, señor.’

‘At Port Bou I will hand it to the French Customs.’

‘If you do, the good God only knows when we shall get back to Spain. And I am longing to see my wife and family, from whom I have been absent now for more than six months.’

Bruce smiled. He made no reply, but

settling himself in a corner, concentrated his wits on the effort to decipher the mysterious writing. Pajarillo, in the opposite corner, sat calmly smoking.

Suddenly the Scot stood up, and held the bit of paper to a small mirror in the side of the compartment. Then he reached for his valise, and got out a pocket-dictionary. 'Little Bird, this is nothing but German script, written in reverse with the left hand. And, unless I am mistaken, it concerns you and me very closely, *amigo*.' So saying, he looked up a few words in the dictionary.

'Hark to this, Pajarillo: "Two individuals very dangerous to the fishing industry have just returned to Spain after a journey most destructive of our useful trade. One is a Scotsman, Donald Bruce, an employee of M'Ilroy, M'Ilroy, & M'Allister, the big wine firm. He lives at Barcelona, but visits the various ports where his firm has interests. They are believed to be financing his present exploits. The other man is an ex-smuggler, also of Barcelona, a long-legged rascal called Pablo el Pajarillo. This precious pair are known to have brought about the destruction during the past six months of at least four fine vessels of our fishing fleet, and to have caused serious trouble to several others. It

is of the highest importance to put an end, at any cost, to the work of these fellows, for not only have they obtained considerable knowledge of our business methods, but they are very skilful and daring. I commend this matter to your immediate and most earnest attention. Send your next invoice through Montlouis.—KARL.”

‘Perdition!’ The Little Bird’s tone was ugly. ‘I should like to get my hands on this Karl’s windpipe.’

‘That fellow Brieto,’ said Bruce, ‘must have followed us all the way from Naples. He is dangerous, for he must have found out about us at the inquiry there into the sinking of our last U-boat.’

‘What will you do?’

‘I will leave this paper with the French authorities at the frontier, with a hint to make the acquaintance of Señor Brieto at the earliest possible moment. I will then go to Andorra to have a talk with Señor Andrea Maquin about the fishing industry.’

Pajarillo smiled wryly. ‘This Brieto has a turn for paraphrase. He has the politeness to call the sinking of four of their cursed U-boats an interference with “the fishing industry”! Oh, excellent! I will go with you to Andorra, Señor Bruce.’

‘And your wife and family, Little Bird, whom you have not seen for over six months?’

‘They will not run away.’ The smuggler blew out volumes of smoke from his cigar. Evidently the prospect of a fresh adventure was a tonic to his lawless soul.

It was not a difficult matter for Bruce to secure in his clothing the slip of German script, together with a hastily written note of his own explaining its origin. The papers of himself and his companion were in perfect order, and with no more than the usual delays of war-time travel they passed the frontier. Not till the train had left the French Customs station at Cerbère, and reached the Spanish station at Port Bou, did he venture to hand his little communication in a sealed envelope to the guard of the train. ‘Monsieur,’ he said, ‘information which may be of importance to the republic is contained in this letter, which I beg you to hand to the proper authority immediately on your return to France. My name and address accompany the information, and as soon as I have attended to certain urgent matters in Spain, I shall be happy to hold myself at the disposition of the French authorities.’

II.

A great deal of interesting matter might be written about that curious political antiquity, the tiny mountain republic of Andorra, which lies in the heart of the High Pyrenees between France and Spain. Donald Bruce, endowed with all a Scotsman's love of knowledge, acquired a fund of information about the quaint little buffer-state in the two days between his arrival at Port Bou and his departure from the last Spanish town of Seo de Urgel into the heart of the mountains. Notwithstanding his pretty thorough knowledge of Spain, Andorra was new to him.

For the purpose of their stalking of Andrea Maquin, he was to pose as an American tourist, collecting material for articles on the historical antiquities and the facilities for sport in Charlemagne's little republic. Pajarillo was to act as his guide. 'I shall address you, Little Bird, in the most atrocious Castilian ever spoken by mortal man. It is fortunate that the Andorrans speak your Catalan dialect, for this will enable me to pretend that I do not understand one word in ten which may be spoken to me.'

Early summer in the High Pyrenees is compounded of sunny mornings and after-

noons of thunderstorm. It was in a deluge of mountain rain that Bruce and Pajarillo drew up their mules before the plain stone Inn of the Six Curarts. The Little Bird explained their desires according to plan, and mine host, who, like all Andorrans, had a keen eye for business, received the supposed American with as near an approach to effusiveness as the reserve of his race permitted. Only one other guest, he informed them, was honouring his poor house at that moment, a wealthy merchant from Madrid, who was seeking in these fine mountain airs the health which overstrain in business and the trying climate of Madrid had threatened to undermine. 'A notable fellow,' said mine host; '*muy simpatico, muy español*'—than which the Spanish tongue contains no greater praise.

They met the merchant from Madrid at supper that night, and learned without much surprise that his name was Maquin. The conversation at supper was carried on mainly by the Little Bird and Maquin, Donald Bruce, true to his rôle of innocent American, contenting himself with nods and smiles, the offer of a well-filled cigar-case, and a few sentences of atrocious Spanish. Over a bottle of wine the Little Bird waxed confidential, and imparted to the Madrid merchant the story

agreed upon as to the literary mission of his patron. Señor Maquin was full of courteous interest.

‘One reads so much about these American journalists,’ he said. ‘And you yourself, Señor Pajarillo, are you well acquainted with Andorra?’

The Little Bird shrugged. ‘With a good mule to ride, and a Catalan tongue in one’s head, one is very well in the Pyrenees.’

‘True. Yet you will pardon me, who have stayed here several months, if I take the liberty to offer a piece of advice.’

‘Good advice does not grow on every bush,’ said the Little Bird. ‘We shall be grateful, señor.’

‘Since your friend is a journalist, he would do well to keep away from the French frontier. The line is not everywhere easy to distinguish in these mountain gorges, and it would be very inconvenient to be suddenly held up and searched in these times of war. There are lawless spirits, too, among the frontier smugglers, and accidents, as you know, Señor Pajarillo, happen so easily.—Do you follow me, Señor Bruce?’

Bruce, who was keenly but cautiously following every word, shook his head. ‘Alas!’ he said in his appalling Castilian, ‘I under-

stand but few words of Spanish—that noble language.’

The veiled threat in Maquin’s caution had not been lost on him, but Pajarillo smiled as he replied, ‘I shall certainly keep my patron from running into danger. That will not be difficult, for, outside his literary work, his one interest in life seems to be fishing.’

‘Fishing!’ Señor Maquin started as if he had been stung. Then he laughed. ‘To be sure! These mountain streams are a paradise for anglers. I shall be pleased to introduce you to some of the best waters.’

‘My patron will be infinitely grateful,’ said Pajarillo. To Bruce, slowly, and in careful Castilian, he explained: ‘Thanks to this gentleman, we are to enjoy some good fishing.’

The Scotsman bowed and smiled with well-affected delight. ‘*Muchisimas gracias*. It will indeed be a pleasure,’ he said with careful mispronunciation.

Afterwards, alone with the Little Bird, he said, ‘That fellow is suspicious.’

The Catalan grinned. ‘To a good angler, the suspicions of the fish are the spice of the sport. We are in no hurry, you and I. To begin with, we are going to make a thorough inspection of the old Council House of the

republic, and in the interests of your magazine you are going to obtain a photograph of the famous charter of Charlemagne in the archives. This will take some time, for the archives, it appears, are kept in a cupboard with an iron door to which there are six locks, and the key of one lock is entrusted to each of the six communes of the republic, and the cupboard cannot be opened except by all the locks being unfastened at the same time. This will give us an opportunity to tramp about the valleys of Andorra, and perhaps to learn a little more of our obliging acquaintance.'

In this surmise the Little Bird proved correct. For the better part of a fortnight Bruce and he spent an innocent mountaineering holiday exploring the *vallées et suzerainetés* of the miniature republic. They tramped the mule-tracks round the mountain-flanks. On the high slopes the sheep-bells tinkled about them; in the deep ravines the swollen spring waters alternated thunderous roar and babbling lullaby. They made acquaintance with many a red-capped peasant working on the patches of arable land amid corn and vegetables and vines, or leading his laden mule amid the wild-flowers that clothed the lower slopes. Señor Maquin displayed a constant lively interest in Bruce's

literary researches, and, to do him justice, was able materially to forward them by his previously acquired knowledge of the country. At last a day came when, at a specially convened meeting of the little Andorran Council, the keys of the archive-chest were produced, and the precious bit of parchment containing the reputed charter of Charlemagne was brought to light, photographed, and replaced. To celebrate the occasion, Bruce, with proper American liberality, entertained the entire Council at the best dinner the Fonda of the Six Curarts could provide. He delivered a speech, which he concluded by toasting the Syndic and Council, the Bishop of Urgel in Spain, and the Count of Foix in France, whose escutcheons in white stone are affixed over the solid oaken door of the Council House.

‘Little Bird,’ said he as they went to bed that night, ‘I feel like a State personage.’

‘To-morrow, Señor Bruce, we must go fishing,’ was the answer. ‘In the meantime, I have made a discovery of more interest than the charter of Charlemagne.’ Glancing at the door, the old Catalan drew from his pocket a slip of paper, and spread it in the light of the candle.

Bruce looked it over, held it to a mirror,

and turned with a grave face. 'How did you get this, Pajarillo *mio* ?'

'Very simply. While you were delivering your great speech, I embraced the opportunity to enter by mistake the room of Señor Maquin, who, as you may have observed, had changed his coat for the dinner. I have noticed that when a man changes his coat, he sometimes forgets to change the contents of his pockets. What does the paper say ?'

'It is a complete list of ships lying in the ports of Marseilles, Bordeaux, and Perpignan, with their destinations, and the probable dates of their departure.'

'*Hombre!* That fellow must have some clever confederates on the French side. What will you do ?'

'We must arrange our fishing expedition as near the frontier as may be. Maquin is certain to accompany us—his suspicion is not dead. It will be for us to make an opportunity to seize him, bind him, carry him bodily across the frontier, and hand him over to the French authorities to deal with.'

As it happened, however, the morrow was a day of pouring rain, and the expedition had to be postponed. All morning the companions sat in the little inn. Instead of the noble view of green vale and towering, pine-clad

mountain, there was nothing visible but sheets of rain. At the midday meal, to their surprise, Señor Maquin did not put in an appearance. Mine host explained that he had been called to Seo on urgent business connected with his firm, but would be back that night. When mine host had gone, the Little Bird looked at his companion.

‘He has missed his paper! I should not wonder if the urgency of his business prevents his return, after all.’

Bruce looked grave. ‘In that case, we must go after him. We must have him watched. We have the paper.’ He took out his pocket-book, and gave a startled exclamation. ‘The paper is gone!’

‘Look carefully. Are you certain?’

‘There is no room for doubt. The landlord’——

‘I think him honest. But this Maquin is too clever for us. He has gone to Seo to send his news to the coast. He will come back to laugh at us.’

And that night Señor Maquin came back. The spy was wet through, but in excellent spirits. He smilingly informed his fellow-guests that his firm had been able to do an excellent stroke of business, for which his presence at the telegraph-office had been

necessary. He discussed the proposed outing for the morrow with great gusto, and notwithstanding the nearness to the frontier of the locality which the Little Bird suggested, he gave the scheme his full approval. 'I will show you such a stream as Adam fished in Eden,' he promised.

'In Eden there were serpents, señor,' said Pajarillo.

'In Andorra,' Maquin answered gaily, 'there are none.' But he gave the smuggler a queer look out of his little dark eyes.

III.

Next morning the three men set forth together. It proved a long and somewhat arduous journey to the stream so eloquently praised, but when they reached it, it certainly promised well. They had not been fishing long, when a fourth individual came up—a peasant of the district, to judge by his dress. He carried a carbine in his hand, and greeted Maquin as an acquaintance. After a few perfunctory remarks, however, he passed on up the gorge through which the stream ran, and was quickly out of sight among the pines.

When he had gone Maquin laughed, and asked, 'Do you know what that fellow is, Señor Bruce?'

‘Not in the least.’

‘You will be able to put in your articles that you have spoken with a real Andorran smuggler. They are all smugglers hereabout, more or less. It is, one might say, the national industry of the republic. Our friend is a little nervous because we are so close to the frontier, on the other side of which he is unpopular. If you will excuse me, I should like to have a few words with him while you continue your sport.’ With a curious smile, Maquin followed the stranger up the gorge.

‘Little Bird,’ said Bruce quietly, ‘if our line had not been fouled, it strikes me that is the second fish we might have hoped to land.’

‘But, as it is, señor, I have an uneasy feeling that if we remain here many minutes, we shall receive a message from our fish in the shape of a bullet from that carbine. It is my opinion that we should enjoy our fishing better if we went a few yards down-stream, where we should obtain the cover of yonder corner of rock.’

‘If we move, they will think we suspect.’

‘For my part, they are welcome to think what they like, provided we secure ourselves against a shot in the back. I have a horrid tickling between the shoulder-blades.’

Bruce smiled. 'The sensation is infectious, Little Bird. Let us do as you say.'

Avoiding backward glances, they moved off slowly, and, considerably to their relief, gained the cover of the rocky corner without any untoward happening. They were deliberating on their further procedure, when they were both startled by a hoarse challenge.

'*Halte-là ! Qui vive ?*'

A lieutenant and half-a-dozen men in the sky-blue uniform of the French soldiery advanced, with rifles at the ready, from the trees on the slope a few feet above. The two companions were completely taken aback, but Bruce politely saluted the officer, an elderly man with a fierce-looking grey moustache.

'Pardon, *monsieur le lieutenant*; we are, I believe, in Andorran territory.'

'You are in France, messieurs. Andorra lies five hundred metres to the south of you. Where are your passports?'

The passports were produced, and the lieutenant frowned as he inspected them.

'These passports specify that you are permitted to enter France from Italy, and to leave it for Spain at Port Bou. You must submit yourselves to be searched.'

'Willingly, *monsieur le lieutenant*.—Hands up, Little Bird. We are with good friends here.'

The search was a thorough one. When Bruce's revolver was brought to light the lieutenant's frown deepened. But presently the soldier who was searching the Scot handed his officer something which brought a more ferocious look into the old soldier's face. He held up a little piece of paper, bared his teeth beneath the grey moustache, and uttered one word: '*Espion!*'

At that terrible accusation Bruce caught his breath, but next moment squared his shoulders and faced the lieutenant with unflinching eyes. 'Monsieur, I do not understand,' he said gravely and proudly.

'*Mes enfants,*' the old Frenchman addressed his men, 'if either of these fellows moves a finger, empty your rifles into him.' He held up the paper before Bruce's face. 'After all,' he said bitterly, 'you must be a shiftless rascal to carry your death-warrant in your pocket across the frontier. Here is a nice list of ships in the ports of Marseilles, Perpignan, and Bordeaux. *Messieurs les Boches* will be disappointed when they do not receive this list of intended victims. Tell me the name of your confederate in France. It may possibly serve you.'

'*Monsieur le lieutenant,* I swear to you by all that is most holy, by the blood of our

countrymen who have fallen, that my comrade here and I are the persons mentioned on those passports, and no other. For months we have been engaged together in the work—the difficult and dangerous work, monsieur—of tracking these Boche submarines and their helpers in Spain; and that we have had good success I am in a position to prove to you, if you will have a little patience.'

'Patience!' the old man snorted. 'This paper does not call for patience, but for explanations.'

'*Monsieur le lieutenant*, I agree.' Yet the Scot read in the keen, dark Southern face that no mere verbal explanations would save himself and his companion from the summary execution which threatened them. A desperate expedient suggested itself. 'With your permission,' said he quietly, 'I hope to provide an explanation which will satisfy you of the truth of what I say, and at the same time be the means of securing for you the real spies, whom my companion and I have been shadowing for this month past in the territory of Andorra.'

The Frenchman shrugged incredulously. 'If you can do that, monsieur, you will do a very good thing for yourselves. I await your explanation.'

‘The men whom you are seeking are in the pine-woods round the bend of this gorge, not a kilometre from this spot. I ask you, *mon-sieur le lieutenant*, to bind my comrade and myself in such a manner that we cannot move hand or foot.’

‘*Et puis alors ?*’ The grizzled old man showed a faint interest.

‘And then I ask you to take us both up this stream to a point ten metres on the French side of the frontier. Draw up your men a score of paces from us—I observe they all have magazine rifles—and order them to fire. But in the interests of justice I beg you to give them the strictest orders to fire over our heads. At the first volley I shall drop. At the second my comrade will do likewise. You will then order your men to retire; but as soon as they are beyond the shoulder of this rock, and invisible from the higher angle of the gorge, let them work back through the pines to a point from which, while themselves concealed, they can completely command our bodies. There let them await what will happen. It will be impossible for us to escape, for we shall be fast bound. I, however, after a short time, will make some signs of life, and will attempt to drag myself nearer to the Andorran side of the frontier. Then,

unless I am very much mistaken, you will see the two men whom you are seeking come out from hiding and approach our bodies, for it will not suit their purpose that there should remain the least chance of our surviving. At whatever moment you deem it expedient you will summon them to halt, and according as they may behave you will know how to deal with them. You will see, *monsieur le lieutenant*, that the proposal which I have the honour to make to you is not without danger to myself and my companion, but the matter affects not only the lives but the honour of us both. Therefore, in case of any accident happening to us in the course of this experiment, I will ask you to apply to the officer in command of the Customs post at Cerbère, who has certain evidence in his possession that we are no spies, but rather the hunters of spies and murderers. I rely on you, as a French officer and gentleman, to make this investigation, and establish our identity. For, if I am to die, I should not wish my name to be branded with unmerited infamy. Will you do this, *monsieur le lieutenant* ?

The veteran hesitated, meeting the Scotsman's grave grey eyes.

‘War is a hard teacher,’ said he at last. ‘I have a son about your age, fighting for France.

I would not willingly send to death a young man who at least has courage and the look of honesty. My men are all picked shots, so I risk nothing. I will do as you ask.—Bind them, *mes enfants*.'

Donald Bruce bowed stiffly, and in a few sentences explained to Pajarillo what was to happen. The Little Bird shrugged his shoulders, and submitted philosophically to be bound.

The plan was carried out in every detail as Bruce had suggested. It was a trying moment when the two stood up and faced the line of loaded rifles. Suppose one of those blue-coated marksmen aimed awry!

The reports rang out, and the bullets sang past their ears. Bruce pitched forward on his face and lay still. The Little Bird rolled sideways to the ground, wriggled convulsively a moment, and was still likewise.

The French lieutenant stepped forward, bent over the bodies, and turned them on their backs. '*Mon Dieu*,' he muttered as he did so, 'but you played that well! Spies or honest men, you are a pair of bold fellows.' Returning to his men, he gave the word to retire in a loud voice, and the frontier guards withdrew.

Bruce and Pajarillo lay staring up into the

blue sky, listening with all their ears for the sound of approaching footsteps. The breeze made a faint murmur in the pines, and the stream babbled musically beside them, but there was no other sound.

‘Now!’ whispered the Little Bird at last. ‘*Vaya con Dios!*’

Bruce made a feeble movement. He groaned. Then he rolled himself slowly along the rough ground for a few feet, and again lay still.

A noise of stealthy footsteps caught his listening ear. With a great effort of will he shut his eyes. He felt, rather than saw, a shadow between him and the sun. He heard a whispered counsel: ‘The knife is best, *compañero*. It makes no noise.’ He set his teeth, still keeping his eyes closed.

And suddenly, imperiously, broke in a shout: ‘*Halte-là!*’

Bruce opened his eyes. Señor Maquin and the man with the carbine were standing between him and Pajarillo. Maquin held a naked knife. A deadly pallor was in his face as he stared round for the challenger. His companion, quicker to realise the situation, sprang for the shelter of the trees; but as he leaped there was a crackle of musketry, and he dropped in his tracks.

Maquin, the spy, saw himself trapped. Like a dog at bay, he drew back his lips and bared his teeth. At that moment his eyes encountered the gaze of the helpless Scot, and the fury of a trapped animal overwhelmed his judgment. With a look of savage spite, he threw up his knife-hand to strike. But even as he bent to deliver the point the rifles spoke from the pine-wood, and his corpse rolled across the body of his intended victim.

It was the old lieutenant himself who pulled it off. 'That was a pretty close thing for you, my friend,' said he to Bruce. 'It is fortunate that my lads have learnt to shoot.' Without releasing his prisoners, he lit a cigarette, and proceeded to examine the pockets of the two dead men. And meantime Bruce gave him at length the story of his expedition into Andorra.

By the time the lieutenant had completed his investigations he had reached the end of his cigarette. He threw the stump away, and with his own hands unfastened the Scot's bonds, directing his men to do the like for Pajarillo. 'Monsieur,' said he, 'if you will trouble yourself to accompany us to Mont-louis, this business may have a fortunate ending for all of us. From what I have been

able to discover on these two rascals, I should judge that France and the cause of the Allies have reason to thank you and your companion. I will not apologise to you for what has happened, for you are both brave men, and understand the difficulties of the times. *À la guerre, comme à la guerre!* Will you give your parole to come with us to Montlouis?’

‘To tell you the truth,’ said Bruce, ‘I was becoming very much interested in my researches into the history and customs of Andorra. But that must wait.—Pajarillo mio, we are going to Montlouis.’

The Little Bird stretched his stiffened arms, which the soldiers had now released. ‘And my poor wife and family, who are looking for me in Barcelona?’ he dolefully replied.

‘They also must wait,’ laughed Bruce.

‘*Ay de mi!*’ said the Catalan. ‘It seems we shall never get home!’

THE BULB-GARDEN.

I.

IT had been rather a tedious fortnight for Donald Bruce and the Little Bird while the French authorities investigated the affair of the Andorra frontier. The court had finished with them at last, and the young Scot and the old Spaniard had been handsomely complimented on behalf of the Government upon the part they had played in the business.

‘To-morrow, Little Bird,’ said Bruce, as they walked that morning beside the broad river, ‘we shall be able to return to Barcelona, and you will at last have the satisfaction of seeing again your wife and family, whom I hope you will find in the best of health.’

The long, gaunt Catalan took the cigar from between his lips, and held it thoughtfully for some moments between his wrinkled, brown fingers. ‘*Quiera á Dios!*’ he piously said. ‘But I am not so sure, Señor Bruce. I am anxious, as you know, to see my poor wife, from whom I have now been separated for seven months. But last night I met a man I know.’

‘So did I, Pablo *mio*. I wonder if it was the same. I met the French lieutenant. You remember Casimir Fanelle, whom we helped to blow up the Boche submarine off Soller? He commands a submarine of his own now. She is down at the mouth of the river.’

The old man’s dark, deep-set eyes showed a momentary gleam of interest, but he shook his head. ‘I remember. But it was not he. It was a black villain named Carril. If what he said is true, I fear there may be yet another delay before we see Barcelona.’

‘Little Bird,’ said Bruce with a faint smile, ‘I believe you smell adventure again. But would a black villain be likely to tell the truth?’

‘The very question I asked myself, señor. Yet they say that when thieves fall out, honest men come by their own. And this fellow Carril has certainly fallen out with his captain. I can never forget that these accursed Boches drowned my poor brother Pedro there in the Gulf of Lions. Besides, there is my bargain with your honourable firm to consider. If this Carril’s story is true, it may be that I can earn yet another of the generous rewards offered by the Señores M’Ilroy, M’Ilroy, & M’Allister.’

Donald Bruce smiled again. When the

Little Bird spoke thus, there was certainly something useful on his mind.

‘You forget, Pablo, I do not yet know who this Carril is.’

Pajarillo pointed with the smoking end of his cigar to a steamer lying out in the stream. ‘He is the wireless operator on the Spanish steamer *La Mosca*. She has brought mules and provisions from South America, and she sails again to-morrow for Spain, to revictual for another voyage. It seems she has been bringing mules for the past six months.’

‘In that case she is working on the right side, my friend.’

‘*Quien sabe?* She is making money both ways, Señor Bruce.’

‘How do you mean?’

The Little Bird took a long pull with closed eyes, and exhaled the blue smoke slowly before replying. ‘It seems that her captain has friends in Spain, who in their turn have friends in Berlin. It seems there is a curious secret about *La Mosca*. The captain has other friends in South America, who, again, have friends in Berlin. It seems that whenever she passes the neighbourhood of the Azores, she somehow contrives to leave something in the sea which is not mentioned on her papers. It seems also that a number of ships

near which she has passed on one or another of her voyages have not been heard of again.'

'*Spurlos versenkt!*' muttered the Scot.

'What did you say, señor?'

'Nothing. Go on, Little Bird.' The Scot's lips set tight.

'There is nothing else of importance, Señor Bruce, except that down there, in South America, this Carril and the captain of *La Mosca* are both interested in the same lady. I gather that the lady is more interested in Carril—there is no accounting for the taste of some ladies. And both of them are very much afraid of the captain. But Señor Carril is persuaded that if he could rid himself of the captain without making too disagreeable a scene, he could prevail on the lady to avail herself of his devotion, and of the wealth which his villainy has amassed. Do I make myself clear?'

'Not entirely, Pablo. It would be interesting to know the nature of this commodity which the captain of *La Mosca* leaves in the sea.'

The Little Bird gave his grave smile. 'This Carril is a difficult fellow,' said he. 'He talks in metaphors. But if he is to be believed, the captain is interested in the culture of bulbs, and is in the habit of leaving

specimens which he has collected, to be planted in a special spot where they may enjoy the benefits of the warm Southern sun and the ocean breezes.'

'I do not profess to know much about bulbs,' said Bruce, 'but I had an idea they throve best in a Northern clime. In the interests of science, it would be good to obtain a few of these specimens.'

'It might be very dangerous, Señor Bruce,' said the Catalan.

The young Scotsman stood with folded arms, staring out upon the broad river. Presently he turned sharply, the light dancing in his grey Northern eyes. 'Little Bird, I have an idea. But first tell me, why should this fellow Carril give you this information?'

'As to that,' said the Spaniard, 'this Carril, knowing me for a man of some judgment, and, if I may say so, of some resource—we were acquainted when I was a *contrabandista* in the south—considered that between us he and I might devise some scheme whereby we might divide a substantial reward.'

'I guessed as much,' replied Bruce. 'We must see that neither of you is disappointed, Pablo *mio*.'

'He is an arrant villain,' the Little Bird objected.

‘We are not concerned with his morals,’ answered the Scot. ‘The only question is, how far is he to be trusted?’

‘One can trust a traitor just as far, to an inch, as his interest and his safety coincide, and not an inch beyond.’

‘I agree. And if one promises, one must give security to such a man for the fulfilment. So far my plan will secure us. Little Bird, I am going to lunch with Lieutenant Fanelle. I invite you to accompany me.’

‘But you will not consult the authorities!’ The Catalan’s wrinkled face was blank at the notion of official interference.

Donald Bruce patted him on the shoulder. ‘A naval officer is not like a Government official. He is a man of sense, who acts first, and talks very little afterwards. On this occasion we cannot do what ought to be done without some outside help. Come!’

A couple of hours afterwards, in a private room at the little restaurant where they lunched, the three conspirators arranged the final details of the plan which Bruce had thought out beside the river.

‘*Ma foi*, but you are bold, Monsieur Bruce!’ said the young lieutenant. ‘It is a great risk that you run. You ought to be in the navy.’

As for my commandant, I will answer for his permission. Our big friend here will have to accompany me in my little ship—as a mere formality, *bien entendu*, for I trust him as I do yourself. And before we start he must find a way of dropping a hint to this creature Carril. You make your attempt, then, to-night. If you do not return before dawn, we shall know that this rascally Spanish skipper has swallowed the bait, and we shall make our dispositions accordingly. If he does not take the bait, you will not need to risk your life, but, on the other hand, an important part of our object may be unattained. In that case you, as well as your friend here, will make the trip with me.'

'Monsieur, I hope to succeed with my bait,' said Bruce.

'*Bonne chance!*' exclaimed the officer as they parted with a handshake.

II.

The night fell dark and still and warm. In the sternsheets of a little patrol-launch Donald Bruce sat stripped to the skin, but with a small bundle of clothes tied on his back. Five hundred yards above the point at which the dark bulk of the *Mosca* loomed in the tideway he slipped silently into the

water, and with slow, regular strokes let himself be carried towards the vessel. She lay in complete darkness save for her riding-lights. Bruce seized her thick mooring-chain, and after waiting a few minutes to recover his full breath, sent up a cautious hail in Spanish. At first there was no reply, but a second and louder hail was followed by the appearance of a man at the peak of the fo'c'sle. A surly voice inquired who called.

‘For the love of God, fetch the *señor capitan!*’ said Bruce. ‘It is a matter of life and death!’

‘Who are you?’ repeated the voice.

‘The captain! Fetch the captain!’ gasped the Scot, as one in dire extremity.

The figure disappeared, and presently reappeared with another. ‘I am the captain of the *Mosca*. Who the devil are you in the water?’

The tone was uninviting in the last degree, but Bruce had not looked for cordiality. ‘One who craves a word with you, *señor capitan*, on a business of life and death. I beg you, pull me aboard. I have money.’

The captain laughed gruffly. ‘*Por Dios!* that is a good thing to have.’

Bruce heard an order given, and presently a rope splashed near the ship's cut-water.

‘Catch hold, and cling tight,’ he was directed.

A few moments later he was hauled up, none too gently, and in the dim light on the ship’s deck found himself face to face with a stout, black-bearded man, in whose hand he perceived a naked knife.

‘Now, Señor Swim-by-Night, you can tell me what is this business of life and death.’

Like a man in the last stage of exhaustion, Bruce dropped to the deck. ‘I am an Englishman, *señor capitan*,’ he panted. ‘I live in Barcelona, but I have been staying in France. But now the French Government is making all Englishmen serve in the army, and, *valgame Dios!* I do not want to serve in the army. I am afraid. I confess it—I am afraid. You are about to cross the ocean. I beg you to take me with you—away from these horrible lands of war. I have money with me—three thousand francs; and I have friends across the sea who will pay as much again.’

‘Who told you I was crossing the ocean, my brave Señor Chicken-Liver?’ demanded the Spaniard, with an oath.

‘It is known at the docks where the ships are going,’ answered Bruce. ‘*Señor capitan*, I will work my passage. I will stoke. I will do anything to escape from this war.’

‘Show me your money,’ came the order; and Bruce, shivering, unrolled his wet clothes and produced a wad of notes.

‘Paper!’ snorted the captain. ‘Paper money is at a large discount over there, my friend. Gold would have been better.’ He thrust forward a villainous face till the black bristles of his beard almost touched the Scotsman. His knife gleamed as he held it up.

‘Cowardly dog,’ he hissed, ‘tell me what is to prevent me from putting your money in my pocket, and sticking this knife into your carcass, and throwing you overboard again!’

‘Nothing,’ Bruce replied, with a steadiness somewhat out of character with the part he was playing. ‘Only in that case, captain, you would deprive yourself of the further sum which my friends on the other side would pay.’

The skipper lowered his knife. ‘True,’ he grunted. ‘These friends of yours must be great fools to part with good money for such a creature as you. Follow me, Chicken-Liver.’

Bruce followed the captain down a hatchway. In the light of a swinging-lamp the Spaniard stood to count the notes in his hand, and to glare from them to the Scot. A sardonic grin overspread his dark face.

‘The money is all right,’ he announced. ‘You are a favourite of fortune, Chicken-Liver. It happens that I want a stoker. While you remain on this ship, therefore, your name will be Juan Calin of Valencia. I advise you to remember it well.’

He pushed open a door, and Bruce followed him inside the close, ill-smelling fore-cabin. In the first berth they came to lay a dead man.

The captain called hoarsely, ‘Pedro!’

A hawk-faced, shambling fellow in shirt-sleeves tumbled out of one of the other bunks and approached, eyeing the naked Scot with a squint of curiosity.

‘Juan Calin is dead, Pedro,’ said the captain. ‘The stokehold was too hard for him. Well, I have found you another who answers to the name. *Viva Juan Calin!* He loves work as a pig loves acorns. Don’t you, Chicken-Liver?’ Here the captain gave Bruce a poke of facetious humour. ‘He is not accustomed to stoke, but he has brought a hundred francs which he is anxious to give to you and your fellows for the trouble you are going to have in teaching him. Put something heavy on Juan Calin *primero*, and drop him in the river before dawn. Take off his clothes, and give them to Juan Calin *segundo*, whose own clothes

had better go down with Juan Calin *primero* into the river. You follow me?’

‘I follow you, captain,’ said the squinting rascal.

‘Juan Calin *segundo* must look the part before the inspection,’ said the captain. ‘Keep an eye on him, and keep him busy. I rely on you, Pedro.’

The squinting Pedro grinned appreciation of the position. ‘I will teach him his trade, *mi capitan*. Trust me.’

III.

The fortnight which Donald Bruce spent in the bowels of the *Mosca* was a period on which he afterwards looked back as a nightmare of humiliation and torment. Nothing but a dogged obstinacy of purpose and an unusually sound constitution pulled him through it. Something of his story seemed to have got about the ship, and he was a butt for the jeers of every man on board. The crew, from the skipper down, were as sinister a lot of desperados as he had ever imagined could be collected in one ship’s company—the very sweepings of the ports of Spain. He had the clear conviction that any hour of his life on board might well prove to be his last. Often, as he sweated, grimy and half-fainting, at the

bunkers and the furnaces, he realised with bitterness that had he had foreknowledge of what his adventure would cost him, he would never have been mad enough to undertake it. As the days passed, the belief deepened in him that there was a deliberate intention on the part of those into whose power he had given himself that he should never reach the other side of the Atlantic alive. Even before the ship left Europe, while they lay off a Spanish port taking in supplies, his position had become so bad that he was sorely tempted to throw up the sponge, and try to swim ashore. But the squint-eyed Pedro was as good as his word, and Bruce never had an opportunity to try so desperate an experiment. So with grim obstinacy he settled down to lie on the bed which he had made, and await the outcome of the adventure.

Only once or twice during the voyage did he come within speaking distance of Carril, the wireless operator.

The first occasion was when they were a few days out from Europe. Bruce had come up on deck for a breath of fresh air after a sweltering turn at the furnaces. He was leaning over the side, idly watching the heaving blue ocean floor, over which the ship was sliding at a good pace. The strong-winged

gulls were flying steadily astern, and the Scot sadly contrasted his present condition with their magnificent freedom.

Some one passed slowly behind Bruce along the deck. As the man passed, Bruce heard distinctly the three words, 'Watch the wake!' spoken in a low, clear tone. He turned and saw Carril, but Carril did not look back.

Bruce moved off to a position from which he could see the ship's wake, lying like a broadening white ribbon across the calm blue of the sea. About a mile away he thought he saw the top of a periscope low in the water. No one else seemed to have observed it, and even as he watched it, it submerged.

The second time he saw Carril was on an eventful day—eventful, because on the morning of that day Donald had made an important discovery. He made it by accident, and was surprised that a device so simple had not occurred to him before.

The *Mosca* had been making heavy weather of it for a couple of days, but that morning the sky had cleared and the sea had somewhat abated. Bruce judged roughly that they must be nearing the Azores group. He had been sent by Pedro with a message to the cook's galley. The cook, a wrinkled Chinaman, had

taken pity on the grimy stoker, and presented him with a titbit. The Scot was surreptitiously devouring this behind the galley door, when he saw the black-bearded captain of the ship encounter the chief engineer outside. He heard the captain say, 'We must test the springs. The water she has been shipping may have got to the mechanism. When will you do it?'

'The sooner the better. Come now,' was the answer. They moved off together.

The Scot put his head out of the galley and watched them go down an alley-way which led, as he knew, to the extreme after-part of the vessel. Bruce suddenly had an inspiration. He had kept his eyes open since he had been on board the *Mosca*, and he had noticed—though at the time it had conveyed nothing to his mind—that the ship had a remarkably full stern, with an unusual mass of overhang. It was to that quarter of the vessel that the captain and the chief had gone like conspirators to 'test the springs.' It flashed upon him in a trice that it was there the *Mosca* carried her secret cargo, which at the chosen time and place those 'springs' were to release.

He dared not follow the two officers, but he returned to the stifling stokehold with a new

elation. He had not, after all, gone through the inferno of this voyage in vain.

That evening, just after sundown, Bruce was smoking on deck, when Carril came along in the dusk, a cigar in his mouth. Passing close beside the Scot, Carril let his cigar fall, and stooped to pick it up. 'To-morrow. Six bells in the morning watch,' said the Spaniard slowly and clearly as he picked up his cigar. Again he passed on without further notice of the man beside him.

With dismay Bruce realised that it would be his watch on duty. But on second thoughts his dismay gave way to satisfaction. For, he reflected, if he were in his bunk when the crucial moment came, it would be a difficult, if not an impossible, matter for him to get on deck without arousing suspicion. On the other hand, the heat of the stokehold in these subtropical latitudes would give him, if he went to work carefully, the plausible opportunity which he sought. It was no uncommon thing for men to faint at the furnaces. He had fainted once before himself, and he knew what would follow. The unconscious man would be carried on deck. A bucket of seawater would be flung unceremoniously over his half-naked body, and he would be left to recover as best he might.

Having made up his mind on his course of action, the Scot carried it through with characteristic determination. Midnight came, and he went to the stokehold with his mates. In order to prepare his way, he told the man next him, soon after the work had started, that he felt very queer that night. A quarter of an hour before six bells—that is to say, at 2.45 A.M.—Bruce contrived a fainting-fit that would have done credit to any melodrama, right in front of the raging mouth of the furnace he was about to feed. Another stoker was close at hand—the Scot had made sure of that—and, with a great deal of cursing, Bruce was lifted and taken on deck, where the programme he had foreseen was carried out to the letter. He was even so fortunate that the engineer in charge of the watch ordered a man to fling a tarpaulin over him when he had been well soused with sea-water. Then they left him to his own devices. It had all happened so quickly that Bruce began to fear that some one would come to look for him again before six bells sounded.

From where he lay he could see the dim outline of the steamer's bridge, and the shape of two men standing near the wheelhouse.

Suddenly a light flashed from the bridge—once, twice, thrice—a ray from a strong

electric torch. There was no other signalling that Bruce could see; but almost immediately the bridge telegraph rang 'Half-speed,' and then 'Dead slow.' One of the figures left the bridge; and presently two men, whom by their step Bruce knew in the darkness for the captain and the chief engineer, passed along the communication-bridge leading to the poop.

Removing his shoes, he stole along the after-deck below them and a little in their rear. He had been so intent on his plan that up to this time he had not noticed that the ship was showing no lights. The circumstance facilitated his cautious ascent of the poop-ladder, and he hastened to conceal himself under a boat slung on its davits. The ship was still going dead slow, and Bruce, creeping aft, could make out the forms of the two men stooping over the deck. He had got within half-a-dozen yards of them, though still covered by the boat, when one of them uncovered a flash-lamp, and he started back into the shadow. The Spaniards, however, were too engrossed in their business to look about them. Bruce clearly saw them raise a plank of the deck, and insert into something just beneath a thing like a steel bar; then the lamp was switched off.

‘Now!’ came the captain’s voice.

The two threw their joint weight on the lever, shoving it hard over. There was an indistinct rumbling from well below the deck, followed by a heavy splash in the water alongside. Bruce peered over the rail, but the *Mosca* was still forging ahead slowly, and he could see nothing. He heard the captain sing out to the bridge for full steam, and glancing back to the deck, saw that the bar had been taken out, and the plank replaced in position.

The Scot began to steal back towards the poop-ladder. In doing so it was his bad luck, notwithstanding his caution, to stumble slightly on a projection of some deck fittings.

In a moment there was a hail behind him: ‘*Quien se mueve?*’ An angry oath followed as Bruce ran for the ladder, but the flash-lamp caught him ere he reached it. He heard the captain’s fierce exclamation, ‘It is the Englishman! *Por Dios*, a spy!’

Well knowing there would be no mercy for him if caught, Bruce instinctively rushed back behind his boat. A revolver-bullet followed him, splintering the gunwale of the boat as he dived behind it. Next moment he realised the trap into which he had run. His pursuers took an end of the boat each. The captain’s light was on him, remorseless, unescapable.

For a moment both his enemies seemed to hesitate to shoot for fear of hitting one another. In his desperate situation the young Scot seized a desperate chance. The ray of the flash-lamp showed him a row of life-belts slung on the side of the boat above him, ready for immediate use in the emergencies of the times. Tugging with frenzied strength at one of these, he broke the sun-rotted cord which held it, and without a moment's hesitation leaped overboard as two shots rang out together.

He lost the life-belt in his wild plunge, dived deep to escape the screw, and presently came to the surface gasping for breath, and seized with the physical panic that the strongest swimmer may on occasion experience. Fighting it down with a great effort of will, he looked about for the steamer. She was already at some distance, and showed no intention of altering course. Putting a strong curb on his fear, the Scot swam slowly in the direction he calculated his life-belt must have taken, and, after some terrible minutes, he had the unspeakable relief of sighting it from the crest of a wave. Having secured it, he rested on the heaving waters, and tried to envisage his position.

If the sharks did not get him, he might last

a few hours before exhaustion set in. His fate lay with a shocking literalness between the devil and the deep sea.

But what was it the *Mosca* had dropped into the ocean? Whatever it was, logic told him it must be floating, and that it must sooner or later be picked up. He wondered how far the steamer had come since he had heard that great splash. Things had happened so quickly that he told himself, hoping against hope, it could not be very far. And he set himself, guided by the stars, to swim doggedly back along what he conceived to have been the vessel's course.

Though the water was not cold, Bruce, weakened by his toil in the stokehold and by bad feeding, soon found himself wearied out. He ceased struggling on, and floated limply, clinging to his life-belt, half-minded to give up the hopeless contest with the immensity of ocean, and let himself go for good and all.

How long he had been in the water he could form no notion. It seemed to have been an eternity. The night was not so dark as it had been. Bruce fancied it must be the dawn coming, and when the waning crescent of the moon slid up out of the heaving waste in the east he thought he must be going light-headed. For it meant he had not been in

the water an hour. The silvery light lay in a shivering lane across the ocean, a lane of which he seemed to make one end and the moon the other.

Suddenly the heart of the despairing man seemed to stand still. In that faint path of light something was moving besides the waves which heaved him up and lowered him into their troughs—a small black object, like the projecting top of a sunken mast. It was moving slowly towards him, a little obliquely.

Even in the first shock of amazement he knew, of course, what it was. It could be nothing else but a submarine. And in a passion of suddenly renewed hope he set himself to swim so that he might cross its path through the water. Fear lent strength to his limbs, for he realised how remote was the possibility of success. He discarded the life-belt as an encumbrance, even though he knew he would never have strength to recover it, should he lose in this gamble for life or death.

And he won! Five yards less progress on his part, and he would have drowned. But he met the rising swirl of water and the slowly moving periscope fairly in its course, and next moment he had encircled the dark upright with arms and legs, and was being borne

along with it through the sea. Even in the moment of success a cold horror seized him at the thought that the vessel might submerge completely. Friend or foe, down in that invisible abode of life beneath the uneasy waters, must be equally unconscious of his presence. At any moment, in their ignorance, they might send him to death by the touch of a lever.

The agony of the young man's position quickened his wits for a last bout with fortune. One of the useful things he had learned in the course of a not uneventful life was the Morse code. Barking his knuckles at every blow, he struck out desperately on the metal shaft to which he clung the longs and the shorts for the one word 'Help.' He waited with a frightful anxiety for the result. There was none, save that the swirl of water about him seemed greater, and that the periscope appeared to move faster through the waves. Again Bruce hammered out his four letters on the shaft. Still the periscope moved on. He felt his muscles failing, and knew that he could not hold on much longer. The splash of the water as the ship drove through it smothered him every few moments, blinding and confusing him.

Then suddenly he realised that the seas

were swamping him no longer. His limbs, unaided by the water, were taking his full weight. Glancing down, he perceived the conning-tower emerge from the waves, and then, sparkling with green phosphorescence like shot silk, the line of the deck came into view. The water-tight door of the conning-tower opened, and a man came out.

‘Help!’ cried Bruce, and tumbled limply as a strong hand seized him.

IV.

After a blank interval the Scot opened his eyes. He was dry. He was warm. Electric lamps glowed about him. Some one was chafing his limbs, and a young man with a black moustache was watching him with a pleasant smile of anticipation from under the peak of a gold-laced cap.

‘*Eh bien, comment ça va?*’ said the young man cordially.

Bruce recognised dreamily the French lieutenant Fanelle. He tried to sit up, but failed. So he smiled—an inane smile, he felt. ‘*Pas mal,*’ he muttered. He was drowsily conscious of a gaunt, familiar countenance peering into his own. ‘Little Bird’—— he began, but for the life of him could get no further. Weak tears filled his eyes.

Pajarillo covered them with a large hand. 'Go to sleep, my friend,' said he. 'The *señor teniente* is for the moment rather busy, but he is anxious, when you have rested, to have the pleasure of some conversation.'

Bruce dropped off to sleep like a child in the hands of its nurse.

Hours later the dull shock of an immense explosion startled him wide awake. Pajarillo was standing beside his bunk in a listening attitude, clinging to a handrail.

'What is the matter, Little Bird?' asked Bruce.

'Nothing is the matter, Señor Bruce—with us. That *teniente* is very skilful. He should get promotion for this.'

'Find me some clothes, Pablo *mio*. *Dios!* I thought we were torpedoed!'

'*We* were not,' answered the Little Bird grimly. 'But the bulb-merchant I told you about back there in France—I should not be surprised if he is out of business. I shall try to find you some clothes, señor, but everybody is very busy. Meanwhile have the goodness to drink this.'

A quarter of an hour later Donald Bruce, temporarily attired in the clothes of a French sailor, ascended the ladder of the conning-tower and emerged suddenly from the electric

light into the midst of a wonderful transformation scene.

For a moment the dazzling glare of the subtropical morning almost blinded him. All around the water sparkled in a wide basin, fringed with low, jagged rocks. A quarter of a mile from the ship, in the midst of the bay, a pall of smoke hung in the clean, still air. On the submarine's deck all was activity. At the forward gun Lieutenant Fanelle was standing with half-a-dozen men, the French Tricolour hanging above them. The gun was ranged on a group of low huts on the shore some five hundred yards away. In front of the huts a machine-gun was in position, but was unattended. A few men from the huts had come down to the water's edge, where they were standing on a little wooden jetty, their hands held above their heads. The submarine was lowering a boat, in which seamen with fixed bayonets were hurriedly embarking.

The young lieutenant turned as Bruce came up. His keen dark face was alight. 'Ah!' he nodded. '*Ça va mieux!*'

'The German U-boat?' queried Bruce.

'Ah!' came the quick ejaculation again. '*Fini, mon ami.* What they call in their jargon, I believe, *kaput. Voilà!*' He pointed to the cloud of smoke, beneath which Bruce

now made out a few objects floating on the sunlit water.

Lieutenant Fanelle, though the soul of courtesy, was adamant in his refusal to allow either Bruce or the Little Bird to go ashore until matters there were squared up to his satisfaction. 'Monsieur Bruce, this is war,' said he. 'You and your friend are brave men, and although, through the force of circumstances, you are wearing the uniform of the Republic, nevertheless you are civilians. One must observe the rules of the game.'

So the Scot and the Catalan were left on board to exercise what patience they might. They saw the men from the huts rounded up, disarmed, and secured under guard. They saw the lieutenant set off again from the jetty, and, with a couple of prisoners in the bow of his launch, proceed to make a tour of the basin.

The Little Bird methodically rolled cigarettes for Bruce and himself. '*Hombre!*' said he; 'it is good to talk one's own language again and be understood. That *teniente* is a terrible fellow. I assure you, señor, for ten days until this morning I have not seen the blessed light of the sun. The stars at night—yes, and the dark water, and your ship ahead of us when we came up for a breath of clean

air. From the day we left the river I do not believe there has been a moment when the *teniente* lost sight of her. Tell me now what happened to you, Señor Bruce; for assuredly you have been as near death as ever we have been together.'

V.

Sitting down on the deck, which was already dry and warm with the sun, Bruce told of his days on board the *Mosca*.

'*Maria purísima!*' muttered the Catalan. 'It is not easy to kill you! Your Government will certainly give you a medal.'

Bruce laughed. 'Medals are for soldiers and sailors, Pablo *mio*. You and I are amateurs, mere *aficionados*. But after you have gone home to your wife and family, I shall ask my employers' permission to join the regular forces. I confess the life of an amateur becomes too trying for me. Now tell me where we are and how we came here.'

'As to that, I confess I do not know,' answered the Spaniard. 'The *señor teniente* will perhaps enlighten you. His boat is coming back. But I warn you, he does not say much.'

For once, however, the Little Bird was

quite mistaken. The young Frenchman was full of the enthusiasm of success. His first thought was to order lunch; his second was to demand a repetition of the story which Bruce had told his comrade. '*Mon cher,*' cried Fanelle, 'let me tell you this is a very fine piece of business. Do you know that in this *sacré* bulb-garden there are enough bulbs—ha! a pretty word!—enough bulbs to blow up a navy? They are planted in the water of the bay, ready for use; they are stored in the huts on shore. Some have a little bar above them, and some have it below them—a terrible little bar, which, if you touch it—pouf! good-bye all! Oh, a magnificent collection of bulbs! I have wirelessly for a ship to come and take them away. We can make use of them, I dare say, to form plantations of our own.'

'Where are we?' asked Bruce.

'We are about twenty leagues from anywhere—that is to say, from the Azores. We are in the midst of a maze of reefs and currents and uninhabited rock islets. It was decidedly clever of Messieurs les Boches to think of making a storeroom in such a spot. Name of a name! We could never have found our way in if that fellow had not shown us the course. You must know that we have not

lost sight of your *Mosca* since we left the river. In the day-time we used to keep our distance, but at night we closed up, and last night we were so near alongside that we actually saw through our peep-hole the splash when the bulbs were dropped. At that moment, I confess, I was anxious. You see, I did not know what it was that the *Mosca* had dropped under our noses. But there came into my mind that *mot* of one of your great men—a cautious man, *parbleu!* though his name escapes me. “Wait and see,” said he. Well, I stopped and waited. But, seeing nothing, after some minutes I ventured to come to the surface—oh, but not too much, I can tell you. And there was a great buoy, painted white and red, floating on the sea. I did not know till that moment that the water was so shallow. “There is the rat-trap baited,” thought I, “but where is the rat?”

‘I gave the order at once to submerge, for the moon was coming up. And good luck that I did, for scarcely were we down again when up came another submarine. Monsieur le Boche, if you please! By the mercy of Providence he had not seen us, and it was clear he was not expecting any interruption, for he came right up to the surface, and

began cruising about in the moonlight, looking for the buoy. "Time to dip," thinks I, and down we went out of sight. But I did not wish to lose that sportsman; so, when we had gone, as I judged, far enough to be safe, I poked up my periscope again. I could not see him—we had come farther than I thought, following the direction of your ship. I was on the point of going about, when—*mille tonnerres!*—there was a tapping on my periscope. *Mon Dieu*, but I was frightened! An aviator who should see the horned devil sitting on a cloud, stretching out his claws, would not be more scared. Tap—tap, tap—tap, tap, tap! The sweat ran down my face. Then suddenly it stopped. And then it began again. "Casimir," I said to myself, "you are a coward." And when I heard myself called that name, I swore. I told myself, "Casimir, if you are to die, you will first go up and face that devil of the sea." So, very cautiously, I pushed the conning-tower above-water and went on deck. There was a black thing like a great ape—you will excuse me, but so it seemed to my fear—clinging round the periscope, and suddenly the thing shouted out, "Help!" and flopped down almost on my head. No sooner had we got it down the ladder than that big friend of yours gave a shout to startle us all,

and pushing us aside, began to pull off its wet clothes like a man possessed. In three minutes he had you rolled in blankets in his own bunk, and was turning the ship upside-down to find the means of restoring you. One would have said you were his only son.'

'He is a loyal comrade,' said Bruce with feeling. 'He and I have been through many adventures together, *mon lieutenant*.'

'May you live to go through many more!' cried the Frenchman heartily. 'Ha! There goes the wireless.'

Presently a petty officer approached and handed his commander a paper, over which Lieutenant Fanelle pored for some minutes.

'It is as I hoped,' he announced. 'I am to stay and take care of the bulb-garden till this *canaille* of the *Mosca* gets back from South America. Then I am to have the pleasure of a conversation with your friend the captain, who will show me over his interesting vessel. In the meantime I regret that my orders are to send you, Monsieur Bruce, and this Little Bird of yours, to the Azores with the ship which is on its way here.'

'I shall be sorry to miss the captain of the *Mosca*,' said Bruce; 'but my friend Pajarillo is a family man, and anxious to get home. So perhaps it is for the best.'

VI.

Some two months later much indignation was being expressed in a crowded compartment of a train leaving Portugal for Madrid. An excited Madrileño had just read to the company a paragraph from a Spanish newspaper he had obtained on crossing the frontier. 'We learn from a well-informed correspondent at Vigo,' said the paragraph, 'that the Spanish steamer *Mosca*, well known in our Atlantic ports, has been captured as a prize off the Azores—it is believed, at the instigation of the Portuguese authorities, on an allegation of carrying contraband of war. This extraordinary seizure of a Spanish vessel is the more unaccountable, inasmuch as the *Mosca* is known to have been engaged in carrying much-needed goods from South America to France. A vigorous protest by our Government is confidently anticipated.'

Angry comment went round the compartment. Every one had something to say, except two weather-tanned men who sat opposite each other in corner seats. Their silence seemed to irritate the owner of the newspaper, who turned to the elder of the two. 'We are all good Spaniards here, I think,' said he. 'What do you, señor, say to

all this? It has come to something when a neutral Spanish vessel, laden with a cargo sent from a neutral South American state to a French port—a French port, mark you—is to be waylaid and stolen on such a transparent pretext! “Beware of silent men and dogs that do not bark,” says the proverb. I ask you, señor, do you approve of such an outrage?’

The sunburned old man looked up with a disarming smile. ‘As to that, *caballeros*, I am a Catalan,’ said he, ‘and know little of shipping matters on this side of Spain. But in Cataluña we have a saying: “The ass that has many owners, wolves devour him.”’

‘And, again,’ put in the younger man opposite, ‘they say also in Barcelona that a woman, a glass, and a ship are always in danger. *Ay de mi*, how slowly the train goes! What did you say was the ship’s name, señor?’

BLACKLISTED.

I.

THE east-bound train from Badajoz had completed about an hour of its journey towards the distant capital, and was pursuing its leisurely way across the low, sun-baked slopes of Estremadura. Passengers from the Portuguese frontier had glanced through their newspapers and were getting drowsy, when the guard, scrambling along the footboards in that casual way they have in the South, stuck a perspiring face through the open window of the compartment, and held up a yellow envelope.

‘Is any *caballero* here called Donald Bruce?’

The passengers looked up from their interrupted doze, and a sunburned young man in the corner by the window got out his passport. ‘That is my name,’ said he, showing his papers.

‘A telegram for you, señor. See, it is addressed to the train at Badajoz: “Midday train for Madrid, station of Badajoz.” It is a full train to-day, señor, or I should have found you earlier. Have the kindness to give me a receipt.’

The passenger did so, accompanying the receipt with a silver piece and a courteous expression of thanks.

It is not often in the pleasant land of Spain that persons are chased by telegrams on a railway journey; and while the young man, himself surprised at the circumstance, opened the despatch, his fellow-travellers regarded him with a certain respectful curiosity. Having read the message, he passed it to the long-limbed old man who sat opposite to him.

The message in the telegram was: 'See the gardener, Prætor's Palace, Mérida, mentioning M'Ilroy, M'Ilroy, M'Allister.' Handed in at Barcelona, it was written in Spanish. The two men looked at each other, and the elder shrugged his shoulders with an air of resignation. 'Mérida is the next station,' said he.

'There is no need for you to delay your journey, Pablo,' said the younger. 'Your wife and family, after all this time'——

'*Basta!*' The keen, bony face of the other leaned a little forward. 'I know what you would say, my friend. But we set out together, and together, *plegue á Dios*, we will return. See, here is Mérida.'

The train ran under the broken arch of a crumbling Roman aqueduct—whose gaunt, ruinous columns could be seen straggling

away across the land like remnants of some race of fabled giants—and came to a standstill in the station. The two men picked up their slight baggage and got out.

Neither had ever been in Mérida before, and on the dusty platform they stood to take counsel while the train rumbled on its way.

‘This is a queer business, Little Bird,’ said the Scot. ‘I know no more than Adam what this message means, yet it must be urgent. My firm must have sent it on the mere chance of its catching me. Three days ago, as soon as we had obtained our papers after landing, I wrote them of my intention to leave for Madrid and Barcelona by this train to-day, and they cannot long have had my letter. What do you make of it?’

Pablo Pajarillo shrugged his broad shoulders again. ‘I confess I can see no meaning in it except what it says. What is a prætor, Señor Bruce?’

‘A prætor, *amigo mio*, is—or, rather, was—a Roman governor.’

‘In that case,’ the Catalan replied ingenuously, ‘he must have been dead some time. We are to visit the gardener of a ghost.’ He crossed himself soberly. ‘The sooner we begin the better.’

They went out of the station on to a

dusty *plaza*, leaving their baggage at the office.

The name of Mérida is not to be found on the programme of the cheap and educative Spanish tour, and yet few cities of Europe have held their heads so high. Here was a capital city of Spain when Spain was giving emperors and generals, poets and philosophers, to swell the might and fame of Rome. The circuit of her great walls was six leagues, and her garrison of eighty thousand infantry and ten thousand horse made her one of the great strongholds of the Roman world. To-day Mérida is a crumbling, fly-blown sepulchre, a cemetery filled with memorials of her mighty past.

The companions crossed the *plaza* in the glaring sunshine, and stood to gaze at a little flower-grown enclosure, in the midst of which, raised on an ancient column, was a white modern statue of a young girl.

‘*Madre de Dios*, what a heat!’ muttered Pajarillo.

It was, indeed, insufferably hot. But the Scot, with the energy of the North in his blood, and the educated man’s feeling for the past stirring within him, found the aspect of this place appealing.

‘Little Bird,’ said he, ‘a glass of cool wine

would be good for you. There is a *posada* of a sort yonder. As for me, I will join you later. But this place interests me, and I must explore it while the feeling is fresh. Our man will be at his siesta for the present. By-and-by we will go and find him.'

'As you will, Señor Bruce. I admit that a glass of wine appeals more to me than walking in the sun about this city of once-upon-a-time.'

Pajarillo made for the *posada*; and Bruce, left to himself, sat down on a wooden bench beneath a tree facing the Roman column, and began to roll a cigarette. There was another man sitting on the seat, a stoutish, middle-aged man wearing sun-glasses and a broad straw hat, engaged in sketching the monument on an artist's block.

He glanced up as the Scot sat down. '*Buenos días, señor,*' said he, civilly raising his hat. 'You are interested in antiquities?'

Bruce raised his hat in acknowledgment. 'I am a man of my century, señor. But an occasional contemplation of the monuments of past ages leads us, I think, to view our own with a better sense of proportion.'

'Very true.' The stranger added a touch to his sketch. 'This monument, now, is a curious mixture of the present and the past.'

‘I confess I do not know whom it represents,’ said Bruce. ‘I am a stranger, brought hither by the accidental demands of business.’

‘Ah!’ The artist gave the young man a keen sidelong glance under his sun-glasses, and went on with his work. Bruce did not take to him.

‘The statue,’ said the artist, ‘is of Saint Eulalia, patroness of this old city, one of the first female martyrs of Spain, according to tradition. They say that as a child she suffered by being baked in an oven, towards the end of the third century. Miracles have since been recorded of her, “worthy of a great saint,” the ecclesiastical historians say. Her shrine over yonder is a still more curious composition of antiquity and modernity. If your business allows you a day or two in Mérida, you will find the city repay examination.’ He pointed with his pencil to a church not far away, in front of which was a massive ancient portico, surmounted by a new cupola in white marble.

Bruce had an uneasy sensation that he was being minutely taken stock of by the learned artist. ‘With permission,’ said he politely, ‘I will stroll across and examine it. A thousand thanks, señor.’

He approached the quaint shrine of the

oven-baked Eulalia. Side by side with the modern dedication to the Christian maiden, he deciphered in the old stone portico the worn, deep lettering of the Roman mason, dedicating the building to Mars, the war-god.

Bruce wandered up a hill to a sunlit group of whitewashed buildings, huddled together in a mere corner of the vast site of the ancient capital. He picked his way amid the flies and the squalor of its mean and ill-kept streets, and suddenly a massive arch, rearing itself high above the houses, shut off the arrowy sunbeams—a triumphal arch to the emperor Trajan, built of great stones without cement, each stone crossing its entire width. On all sides of him the voices of long dead ages whispered to his imagination from crumbling stone and broken column. Bruce wandered on, and presently came to the Guadiana, sluggish now, and streaked with shoals in the hot September sun. But over its dawdling, murky waters a great Roman bridge, half-a-mile long, with scores of heavy arches, witnessed to the fury and the extent of the river when in flood. Upon inquiry, he learned—as he had guessed—that the massive wall fronting the hither end of the great bridge contained the ruins of the Roman prætor's palace. He found also that visitors were admitted to inspect the

place, and was shown the entrance. For an hour he sat in a shady spot beside the river, and indulged his fancy in dreams of the past. Then, recalling himself to the present and its quest, he set off to return to his companion.

II.

Bruce found his philosophic comrade engaged in a friendly game of cards with the landlord of the *posada*, and ordered refreshment for himself till the game should be played out. Then Pajarillo and he took their way together to the prætor's palace. The artist with the sun-glasses was by this time gone from the statue of Eulalia, but it appeared that he had paid a visit to the *posada*.

‘An inquisitive fellow,’ said Pajarillo. ‘One must humour such. He gave me a good *puro*, and in exchange I fibbed to him that you were a commercial traveller from Zaragoza, and that I was your servant. When he had gone, the landlord told me about him. It seems he is a rich merchant from Madrid, who has retired here to lead a quiet life. He has hired one of the largest houses in the town, and spends his time making pictures of old buildings and entertaining his friends. An open-handed fellow, the landlord says. Nevertheless, I do not like him.’

‘Nor I, Pablo. Is he a Spaniard?’

The hawk-faced old man gave his friend a quick glance. ‘*Dios lo sabe!*’ he shrugged. ‘He speaks the Castilian, and I am a Catalan. His name is Marinero, but I never heard of mariners in Madrid.’

‘Well, the man is no concern of ours, Pablo mio. This is the way.’

Bruce turned into a cobbled side-street, and they came to a wrought-iron gateway in an old wall beneath orange-trees. To the woman who answered the bell he explained that they sought permission to inspect the Roman ruin.

The woman led them down a pleasant path-way, arched with trailing roses. Half-way down it a similar path running off at right angles gave access to a rambling stone building, in appearance half-ecclesiastical, half-domestic. Stopping at the angle, she pointed on to where the first path opened upon an extensive garden.

‘The house is occupied, *caballeros*,’ said she. ‘It is the old walls of the garden which the learned, who sometimes come here, always wish to examine; though what Christians find to interest them in these old stones of the heathen I confess I do not know. Be good enough to summon me when you return.’

Emerging from the trailing roses, the two

companions found themselves in a place fit to charm the soul of an artist or a poet. A fragrant garden, rich with all that the Southern sun could ripen, filled a great quadrangle enclosed by the street wall and the house on one side, and on the other three by the vast, crumbling walls of the Roman age. Here a grove of gnarled grey olives, here figs and oranges, citrons and pomegranates, and many fruits and flowers strange to Northern eyes, thrived in the fertile soil. They slowly crossed the garden to the massive walls on the farther side. There, in an angle of the Roman wall, where a bastion looked far out over the river and the undulating landscape, a mule harnessed at the end of a long wooden bar was plodding slowly round and round, drawing up water from a subterranean cistern by means of a chain of little vessels, on the prehistoric principle still followed in the East. In the hot sunshine the musical plash of the water falling from the revolving vessels into the receiving-tank had a tantalising sound. Under a fig-tree hard by, an aged gardener, with a hat of monstrous brim, sat smoking the eternal cigarette, uttering an occasional '*Arré!*' to remind the leisurely mule that it was supposed to be working, and then relapsing into meditation.

At the approach of strangers the old man

rose courteously. 'You would see the ruins, *caballeros?*' He led them on to the time-worn battlements, from which they looked out upon the sun-baked slopes beyond the modern city. As they picked their way along he pointed out the most prominent objects around: the long Roman bridge, the arch of Trajan, the broken ruin of a vast amphitheatre—'the Seven Seats,' the old man called it—which rose against the sky, and the tottering arches of mighty aqueducts that once brought drinking-water from many miles away. Descending again into the garden, he led his charges under an arched stone entrance-way, and so back to his cistern by an underground passage, walled and roofed with stone, and concealing in its gloom, as the old man showed them with a candle, marble pillars admirably carved, of differing styles and epochs. They all sat down again under the fig-tree, and the guide accepted a proffered cigar with a courtly air.

'Many a man,' said Bruce sententiously, 'weary of the bustling life of cities, would think himself in Eden to have the charge of a garden such as this.'

The old fellow nodded. 'I have dwelt here thirty years, señor. And yet even in Eden there was the serpent.'

‘Very true,’ the Scot agreed. ‘Let us hope you have none here, señor gardener.’

‘*Quien sabe?* The serpent is a wily beast, señor.’

Bruce felt that he was approaching his affair. ‘This Mérida of yours is an interesting city,’ he said carelessly. ‘I should be sorry to have missed the opportunity of seeing it. A friend of many years, a Señor M’Allister, gave me the good advice to come.’ He saw the old gardener start.

‘You are from Barcelona?’ came the question in a lowered voice.

‘Both of us,’ Bruce replied. ‘Is it possible that you are acquainted with Señor M’Allister, of the firm M’Ilroy, M’Ilroy, & M’Allister?’

‘Señor M’Allister has been a kind benefactor to me,’ the old man answered simply. ‘It was he who obtained me my post here with the count, to whom the place belongs. And years afterwards he took my son into his employ, and my son has made good progress with that excellent firm.’

‘I should know your son. What is his name?’

‘Arleto is my name, señor.’

‘Enrique Arleto is, then, your son?’ Bruce smiled. ‘Enrique is one of our most trusted clerks.’

The old man rose and bowed his pleasure at the compliment. 'If I might know, señor, to whom I have the honour to speak?'

'I am Donald Bruce, confidential secretary to Señor M'Allister.'

Arleto raised his great hat, turned a moment to stimulate the flagging energies of the mule with a sharp '*Arré!*' and looked cautiously round the garden. 'A few days ago,' said he, 'I sent a letter to my son, Enrique.'

Pablo Pajarillo, who had sat quietly smoking thus far, had followed the gardener's glance. He broke in harshly, 'Señor Arleto, with permission, my friend and I would like to inspect once more those marble pillars in the subway.'

The gardener showed surprise at the sudden request, but led the way down again without a word.

'My apologies for interrupting,' said the Catalan calmly. 'Pray proceed with your conversation, gentlemen.'

Old Arleto looked earnestly at Bruce. 'Since you are in the confidence of my benefactor, I will say that in my letter to Enrique I hinted at a possible danger to Señor M'Allister.'

'Of what nature, my friend?'

'I cannot tell, señor. Three months ago

the count let this place to a certain Señor Marinero.'

'Who has just entered the garden from the house,' observed the Little Bird.

'*Dios!* I did not see him!' The gardener's uneasiness was obvious. 'Is he coming this way?'

'He is not,' said Pajarillo. 'But it occurred to me that he might. He is sitting under a cypress-tree with a newspaper. To tell you the truth, he is too inquisitive a gentleman for my taste, Señor Arleto.'

'I am afraid of him!' the old man blurted out. 'I must be quick with what I have to say.'

'Calm yourself,' said Bruce. 'Señor Marinero knows nothing of us.'

'*Quien sabe?* He knows more than people think. These are dangerous times, and he is a dangerous man. I am placing my safety, perhaps, in your hands, *caballeros*, but I owe a duty to my kind benefactor. Here is the reason for the letter which I wrote to my son.' The old man drew from his pocket a sheet of paper, and spread it out in the ray of the candle, which he had relit.

Down the left-hand margin of the paper, in bold writing, were inscribed half-a-dozen names which the Scot instantly recognised as those

of some of the most prominent British agents and business houses in the Peninsula. In the space against each was a brief report in German script. The first three names were struck through in red ink, and against each were set the initials 'F.v.F.' The fourth name on the list was that of M'Ilroy, M'Ilroy, and M'Allister. Bruce knew sufficient German to make out the notes written against the name, in a different hand, but with no attempt at disguise. 'Details most difficult,' they ran, 'but all information indicates dangerous activity. Loss of several successful U. confidently believed traceable to secret action on part of this concern. Suppression urgently necessary. Recommend great caution.' The notes appended to the other names on the list ran on similar lines.

'Where did you obtain this paper, my friend?' asked Bruce.

'On the day I wrote to my son, señor, I was gathering figs from the tree yonder under the wall. Señor Marinero was writing in the harbour near by, when a message was brought him from the house, and he left suddenly, thrusting his papers into his pocket. I noticed one of the papers slip to the ground, but he was in a hurry, and did not observe it. When I had filled my basket I came down

and picked up the paper, intending to give it to him. But as I picked it up I noticed the name of my benefactor, and then I looked and saw these other names. As for the writing between, I could make nothing of it. But I saw some names were struck out, and I read the newspapers, señor. There is the name of Señor Robertson, of Madrid. The papers said that he was killed in a climbing accident in the Pyrenees. There was the mining firm of Belper. Their works were wrecked by a great explosion a month ago, and Señor Belper was among the dead. And there was the consul, Thomas, who disappeared so strangely only a fortnight since.'

'What kind of persons are in the habit of visiting Señor Marinero here?' Bruce inquired.

'Some Spaniards, some foreigners. Usually they arrive in the night.'

'What else do you know of this Marinero?'

'Nothing, *caballeros*, except that he paints many pictures, and sometimes he is absent for days at a time from the town. He pays well, and therefore is well spoken of.'

'An easy road to good repute,' commented Bruce. 'Well, señor gardener, it grows towards evening, and we have to find an inn. It is fortunate that you and we have met, and

maybe we shall meet again. Meantime, I rely on your discretion.'

'To see, to hear, and to be silent are three rooms in wisdom's house,' said the old gardener as they emerged again from the subway.

III.

Bruce and Pajarillo recrossed the garden in the glow of approaching sunset, and, as requested, summoned the *concierge* to let them out.

'Señor Marinero has finished his paper,' said the Little Bird.

The woman led them back to the door in the street wall, and having received a gratuity, was about to open it, when footsteps sounded behind them, and Marinero himself came down the path. Greeting them courteously, he dismissed the servant, saying he would himself let them out. 'But first,' he added when the woman had left, 'let me assure myself, gentlemen, that you have seen all my poor house has to show.'

'We have spent an interesting and instructive hour, señor,' answered Bruce. 'You are fortunate indeed to have found a retreat so full of historic memories.'

'Full, indeed, it is,' Marinero agreed—
'fuller even than your short visit might

suggest. The house itself, as you will have perceived, is comparatively modern, but it is not, perhaps, known to you that the Moors, as well as the Romans, had a fortress here, and that in parts of this building the tribunals of the Holy Office were held during the period of their power.'

'I confess we had no idea of it,' answered the Scot.

'You must return another day, and make a fuller examination at your leisure, gentlemen. But, to whet your curiosity, I must show you, before you go, something of what still awaits your attention. Come.'

He led them along the inner side of the street wall to where it made a corner with the Roman masonry. Here a short flight of worn stone steps descended to a small Moorish doorway cut in the older stonework of the wall. 'I take it,' Señor Marinero said, 'that this door took the place of an older one dating from the Roman epoch, for it is inconceivable that the chambers to which it leads could ever have been hewn out, once the wall had been constructed.'

With a key which hung from a nail he opened a worm-eaten oak door, and lighting a candle which stood within, proceeded along a narrow stone passage, flanked on either side

by small chambers that had apparently served as dungeons. Tiny windows in the inner side of these gloomy cells admitted from the passage itself the only light and air which they received. Presently the passage widened into a fair-sized square room constructed in the thickness of the wall, floored with stone, and lit by two slits from the side of the garden. Immediately beneath these windows, if such they could be called, was a small raised dais, and round the walls of the apartment, and here and there on the stone roof, were remnants of rings and iron constructions of a sinister look.

‘I imagine this,’ said Señor Marinero, ‘to have been a kind of examination-room for prisoners. We are fortunate to have been born in another age.’ He shrugged his shoulders, and passing through the grim room, went on along the passage. A little farther on it ended abruptly in a much smaller room, perfectly circular, and floored with wood instead of stone. A single slit in the garden wall admitted a faint glow of the evening light, and below the slit several stone steps were built into the wall. Beneath the perpendicular slit of the window was a narrow horizontal one, which admitted no light, and from one end of which a thick iron bar or lever protruded.

‘This room, gentlemen, is one of the most curious in the whole place,’ said Señor Marinero. ‘As the light is fading, it will be convenient if we conclude our tour here for the present. This room has evidently been used in comparatively recent times, and its purpose is a strange one. With your permission, I will show you a quaint example of medieval ingenuity.’ He ascended the stone steps, and placing his candle on the top one, took hold of the iron bar. Looking back over his shoulder with a smile, he added, ‘If you will stand somewhere towards the middle of the room, you will better appreciate the effect.’

Totally unsuspecting, the two friends did as requested.

Bearing his weight on the lever, Marinero thrust it the full length of the slit in the wall. A rumbling seemed to come from all round the room, and a wild shout broke from the Little Bird: ‘Treachery! *Madre de Dios!*’

He sprang for the corridor, but too late. Responding to some infernal mechanism, the wooden floor gave way suddenly beneath their feet, and, like children shot off a seesaw, Bruce and Pajarillo were precipitated violently into a chamber below.

Bruised and half-stunned by the fall, they looked up from the darkness of their prison,

and saw their guide, candle in hand, peering down from the security of his stone perch with an expression of malignant triumph.

‘What do you think of our Moorish mouse-trap?’ he cried, shaking the fist of his left hand at them. ‘English spy and Spanish cut-throat, what do you think of this interesting example of medieval ingenuity?’

With a great effort controlling his voice, Bruce answered, ‘Do you intend to murder us?’

‘I will tell you a little story, English pig,’ said the other. ‘A fine romance, by Franz von Festinghaus.’ He laughed gloatingly. ‘There are two villains in my story. One is called Donald Bruce, and the other Pajarillo.’

A knife flashed suddenly out of the darkness past the candle, but the Little Bird was too shaken by his fall for a true throw, and striking harmlessly on the stone wall, the knife fell back into the blackness below.

‘Do not interrupt,’ said the German, with a grin. ‘If anything happened to me, you would assuredly never get out. Well, there was once a fine fellow named Franz von Festinghaus, of good family, but poor, and condemned for the sake of the Fatherland to labour in that desert of thieves called Spain. Of that cursed land this Franz, by industry

and application, acquired a very thorough knowledge, which enabled him, to his great joy, to give valuable help to his country in her struggle against the attacks of her enemies. In his youth he had served in the glorious German Navy, and by care and forethought, and his wide acquaintance and influence in Spain, he was able to contrive many schemes to aid our gallant undersea boats, which earned him high commendation from his country's representatives, and were even brought to the notice of the All-Highest War Lord himself. After some time, however, it began to be evident that sinister agencies were working on the part of the enemies of *Kultur*; unaccountable disasters overtook many of our heroic vessels. The representatives of his country sent for Franz, our hero. Money without limit, and the services of a regiment of trusty agents throughout Spain, were placed at his disposal. Two orders only were given him—"Protect our heroes, and destroy those who are working against them." Well, he set to work, our Franz; but the task was hard and dangerous, for the enemies were cunning, and left little trace. They were working, moreover, not all together, or on any settled plan—for our enemies do not understand co-ordination—but like blind mules they were toiling

obstinately, one here, one there, to defeat our successful campaign whereby we hold the Mediterranean in a grip of terror.

‘I will not tell you how Franz obtained his information, but he obtained it, and as the evidence accumulated against this or that agent of our foes, one by one was suppressed. But month after month there came stories of two men, an Englishman and a Spaniard, and wherever these two went there occurred mysterious losses to our cause. Whence they came, and who financed them, it was long ere Franz von Festinghaus could ascertain; and even to-day there is much to be explained. As for the Spaniard, he was reported to have been a notorious smuggler, and to have lost a brother in one of the ships torpedoed by our commanders. The unearthing of these two men caused our Franz more uneasiness—yes, I will admit it—more fear and worry, than any other inquiry. It was just when he had begun to despair of bringing them to book that one of their shrewdest blows against the Fatherland gave him at last the opportunity he sought. Through the plotting of these two villains, a trusty comrade, who was gaining valuable information for our commanders, was shot by the French on the frontiers of Andorra. The French did everything possible

to keep the matter secret ; but it is not easy to defeat our intelligence service, and at length, to his joy, Franz received from a sure hand a series of photographs of these two men. That was some two months ago, but in two months much may happen. Copies of these photographs were disseminated through Spain, wherever a faithful soul was working for the Fatherland, and high rewards were promised to him who should succeed in tracking those villains. Two days since a telegram—oh, a harmless commercial message—came to me from Portugal. The spoor had been struck ! And then, like a gift from the gods, this very day, as I was pursuing my hobby of an artist outside the station, behold, the very men came walking up to me ! I knew them at once, so carefully had I studied the photographs. Yet at first I dared not believe my eyes. I studied them both. I studied the likeness again. I was certain ! And now, *Gott sei Dank*, they are down there !’ The German shook his fist again with fierce delight. ‘And they ask what I am going to do with them ! *Ach*, my good mouse-trap—it is *kolossal* !’

‘This is a civilised land,’ said Bruce. ‘It is known that we came to this house. There will be inquiries.’

‘And it will be known that you left, swine-dog!’ was the answer. ‘My servant saw you to the door, whence I myself can swear that I dismissed you. And who will be likely to inquire about you?’

‘Those who sent me hither,’ answered the Scot. ‘And they have a long arm, Herr von Festinghaus.’

‘They will need it, to reach you,’ laughed the German. ‘But this brings us to something practical. Who are “they”? I have suspicions, and a chain of evidence, but it lacks the connecting link. If either of you wishes to see again the light of the sun, you will answer that question, and in exchange for the information, duly verified, I will give you your lives.’

‘And the alternative?’

‘To lie there till you rot,’ answered the German brutally.

‘And what security have we that your promise will be kept?’ asked Bruce, steadying his voice.

‘The word of Franz von Festinghaus.’

‘For my part, the security is insufficient,’ answered Bruce. ‘My companion will exercise his own judgment.’

‘Señor Bruce,’ said the Little Bird, ‘it coincides with yours.’

‘In that case,’ said Von Festinghaus, ‘I leave you to your reflections. To-night I start for Barcelona to remove another obstacle to our cause. In a few days, when I return, I will come and see whether your views—if by that time either of you still has any—remain the same. *Buenas noches, caballeros!*’

He set the candle on the stair again, dragged at the lever, and the great timbered floor, which hung aslant like a tilted plate, slowly resumed its horizontal position, shutting off from the captives the last spark of light. They heard the German’s footsteps die away in the stone passage; then all was dark and silent as the grave.

IV.

‘This is an evil place, Señor Bruce,’ came the voice of the Catalan presently through the blackness. ‘I ask your forgiveness.’

‘For what, Little Bird?’

‘If I had restrained myself a little, my knife would have gone through that fellow’s throat. A man’s temper should be under better control at my age.’

‘Nonsense!’ said Bruce testily. ‘It is I who am to blame for leading you into this, Pablo. Yet, sooner or later, there must be inquiry after us.’

‘Sooner or later,’ echoed Pajarillo grimly. ‘It is not to be denied that that fellow is clever. But he is no Christian.’

‘He is a devil!’ cried Bruce. ‘Are you hurt, Pablo?’

‘My left wrist is sprained, and my legs are bruised.’

‘I am not hurt. I must have fallen on you,’ said Bruce. He struck a match. Its feeble glow showed how desperate was their position. The floor of the cell was of dry earth, smooth and hard. The grim wall which everywhere surrounded them, massive stone on massive stone, gave not the faintest hope. Ten feet above their heads the huge wooden floor of the chamber above shut them down—‘like the lid on a saucepan,’ as Pajarillo said. Along the middle of it a great iron bar provided the axis on which the floor had swung. The nature of the mechanism which operated the turning was not apparent, but on the circumference of the floor on one side were metal claws which now held the floor in position.

There came a sudden flutter of wings in the pit, and something struck the flickering match from the Scot’s fingers. ‘A bat!’ he exclaimed, starting back with repulsion.

‘Where bats can enter, air can enter. Light

another match, *amigo*,' said Pajarillo. Bruce did so, and Pajarillo groped about the floor. '*Gracias á Dios!*' he cried, 'my knife is not broken. *Viva* the steel of Toledo!'

'Toledo steel will not cut through Roman masonry, Little Bird.'

'Nevertheless, with this in my belt I feel better. One more match, now, and a cigarette apiece, while we compose our minds.'

The cigarettes were lighted, and the companions sat smoking in the terrible dark.

'Pablo,' said Bruce, 'I have not your philosophy. God knows, our own state is bad enough, but there will be murder done in Barcelona when that German villain gets there.'

'If so, we cannot help it, Señor Bruce. It is a mistake to think of what one cannot help. There is but one thing for us to think of, and it is how we are to get out.'

'It is impossible,' said Bruce wildly.

'I admit I fear it. Yet a man's brains are for thinking, and may the good God direct our thoughts!'

'Little Bird,' said Bruce in a harsh voice, 'if I go mad in this awful place, strike that knife of yours into my heart. Strike true, and Heaven reward you!'

'Dear friend, whom I love,' the Catalan

replied, 'if the time comes I will strike, and strike for two. But the time has not come. Think!'

They sat a long time smoking in silence, then threw away the ends of their cigarettes, and watched the tiny red sparks go out. In the utter stillness each could hear the other's breathing.

'Little Bird!' whispered Bruce at length. There was no reply. 'Little Bird!' he whispered more loudly. Still no reply, though the breathing beside him came deep and regular. Bruce realised with a shock that the old man was asleep!

Well, let him sleep. Bruce knew it would be cruelty to disturb him. Long he sat listening to that regular breathing, filled with agonised thoughts. At last he, too, must have dozed, for he suddenly felt his shoulder shaken, and discovered his companion standing in the dark beside him.

'Awake, señor; awake!' cried Pajarillo, and his voice had a confident ring. 'I have slept, but I have dreamed a good dream in a bad place. I was home in Barcelona, and from the glare of the streets I had stepped into the gloom of our grand old cathedral to say a prayer of thanks to San Pablo, my protector, in his chapel behind the apse. I had lit a

candle before the image, and, as it burned, suddenly the flame shot upwards—a keen white shaft of fire that struck to the very roof. I watched in fear, and saw that the roof was burning, but I could not move. Then a glowing beam fell at my feet, and looking up, I saw the fire extinguished, and through the roof the moon sailing in heaven.’

‘An odd dream, *amigo*. Would we were in the cathedral now!’

‘With the blessing of God we shall be there ere many days. Strike a match, Señor Bruce.’

Before the match went out, the Catalan picked up their two straw hats from where they had rolled. Bruce heard him tearing the straw. ‘Now,’ said Pajarillo, ‘take my knife, and get upon my shoulders. You are the smaller man. Cut away at the lid of our saucepan as hard as you can.’

‘Cut through a solid oak floor with a sheath-knife!’

‘*Por Dios*, if there were no better way, I would try that, ere I would die like a rat in a hole! But, by the blessing of the saints, we have both steel and fire. Oh, *là-là*! The good San Pablo shall have his candle! Quick! Climb!’

Understanding came to the Scot. Des-

perate as was the expedient, it gave new hope. 'You would have us burn our way out, Little Bird!'

'I would have us try. Step by step the pilgrim goes to Rome. Mount, and begin. Cut little chips and strips, till the knife bites well. Above all, do not snap the blade. When you tire, you shall carry me.'

Scrambling on his friend's broad shoulders, Bruce struck a match. The Catalan carried him to a point immediately beneath one of the iron clamps which held the floor, then bade him stand on his shoulders and steady himself by the wall as he worked. 'Keep the knife clear of the iron!' he warned.

In the inky darkness the Scotsman began hollowing out the timber above the iron as Pajarillo directed. It was fatiguing labour for a man who had not tasted food for many hours. After a while they changed parts, and so, taking turn and turn about, worked feverishly till exhaustion compelled a rest. By that time they had hollowed out two respectable scoops in the thick, though worm-eaten, timber, one horizontally above the iron claw, the other straight upwards through the floor, so far that its apex made a hole an inch or two in diameter. A match which they struck to inspect the result of their labours showed

a goodly heap of chips and shavings on the floor of their prison.

‘It will do,’ pronounced Pajarillo. ‘The timber is dry.’

They stretched their aching limbs on the ground, and smoked another cigarette.

‘Now for San Pablo’s candle!’ said the Little Bird. ‘First we will offer him our hats. Fill your pockets with chips. I will do likewise, and mount first.’

Climbing up again, the Catalan inserted the strips of torn straw into the horizontal funnel, and applied a match. As the flame took hold, he fed it with chips of wood, dodging from time to time the burning fragments as they fell. When they had burnt up all the wood in their pockets they refilled them, and Bruce took his turn as stoker. By now the fire had gained a grip of the thick, dry timbers of the floor, and the flames licked redly round the angle between the funnels and up the chimney formed by the upright one. A few minutes later the corner of the floor was unmistakably on fire above their heads. With the heat and the smoke beginning to trouble them, the two prisoners strove to confine the outbreak to the area round the hole. In this they succeeded beyond their hopes, the strong draught created by the little window in the

upper chamber causing the flames to roar lustily up through the chimney, while leaving them comparatively cool below. Their principal danger was from the burning fragments that fell upon them as they worked.

Gradually the heat and smoke increased. The hole burned larger and larger; but their throats parched and their breath came in pants as they hacked at its glowing rim. From time to time they flung themselves down on the floor to escape the fumes; but they dared not lie long, lest the whole mass of timber above them should ignite and bake them, like St Eulalia, in an oven.

At last, as they were lying face downward in the remotest part of their prison, a great slab of red-hot timber crashed to the ground, leaving the gap nearly a yard across.

‘We must put the fire out!’ gasped the Little Bird. ‘Can you bear me?’

They kicked the blazing fragments from under the hole, and acrid smoke filled the pit. Bruce tottered towards the fire, and the Catalan, climbing on his shoulders, hacked wildly at the burning edges above him till the showering fragments drove them, choking, back. Again and again they returned half-fainting to the attack, but little by little the conflagration was being curbed. Nerved by desperation,

they conquered at last, and, utterly prostrated by their frightful ordeal, flung themselves, scorched and gasping, on the ground.

A long time they lay there like dying men, while the air slowly freshened about them, and above them the charred wood slowly cooled. Then they staggered to their feet again, and cut away the still glowing edges, and rested once more.

‘It will be cool enough to try now,’ said Bruce at last. ‘Come, Little Bird.’ The younger man’s vitality had lasted the better, and it was he who now, though his limbs tottered under him, took his companion on his shoulders. Getting his arms and shoulders through the gap, the Little Bird dragged himself up. It was too far down for him to reach his friend, but stripping off some of his clothes, the Catalan made a rude rope, by means of which, despite his injured wrist, he hauled the young man up after him. They rested again ere making their way along the dark passage by which they had entered, only to find the door at the end fast locked.

‘*Ay de mi!*’ groaned Pajarillo, ‘that villain did not mean us to escape. But it is an old lock, *amigo*. It should be reasonable.’

They flung their united weight upon the door. The rusted lock gave with a crash, and

stumbling out into the blessed air, they ascended the worn stone steps to the garden, and found themselves face to face with the old gardener.

White to the lips, the old man stood back against the street wall, and stared as at an apparition. And indeed, haggard and grimed with their fighting of the fire, with torn and burned clothing, they were a sufficiently terrifying pair to emerge in the first paling of dawn from the heart of the ancient ruins.

Bruce went and took the old man by the arm. 'Señor gardener, where is that villain, your master?'

The hue of life came slowly back into the old man's face. '*Madre purísima!*' he stammered. 'It is the *caballeros* of yesterday! Señor Marinero went by the night train for Madrid. I smelt fire, gentlemen, and came into the garden.'

'Señor Marinero has tried to murder us,' said Bruce. 'Get us out of this quickly, and say nothing to any one.'

'There is no one in the house except my wife, who is deaf, and my daughter, who answers the door, and she is asleep.'

'In that case, we will go first to the well, and wash and drink.'

As they crossed the garden Bruce outlined

their night's experience, amid exclamations of sympathetic horror on the part of the old man. While they washed he brought them food, so that when they emerged later into the street their aspect was less calculated than it had been to arouse terror or suspicion. There was no train for the capital till nine o'clock, by which hour they had each purchased a much-needed new suit of clothes.

V.

On the slope of a wooded hill in the pleasant environs of Barcelona, a narrow gateway gives access from the road to a well-kept drive which, sweeping in wide curves through groves of oranges, citrons, and figs, leads to the white façade of a wealthy merchant's country seat. In a shady arbour, overlooking the rich plain, the distant city, and the blue sea beyond, an old man was sitting, with a girl of twenty summers at his side. The sunny garden around them was musical with the splash of fountains, and fragrant with the scent of flowers. It was Sunday, and a lifelong residence in the South had not changed the attitude of old Alan M'Allister to that day. In no single office or wharf of the many which his firm possessed throughout Spain was any business done on the first day of the week. A

little Union-Jack hung over the harbour. A letter lay open on the old gentleman's knee—a letter from his only son, a captain in His Majesty's Navy. A proud light shone in the old eyes as he gazed out over the Mediterranean.

‘Thank God, you have a brave man for your father, child,’ he was saying. ‘I won riches; but my son is winning honour. Eh, Flora, but this war makes an old fellow wish he were young!’

The fair-haired girl smiled. ‘How many old gentlemen of seventy-five could say positively, grandad, that they had put six German submarines out of action?’

Alan M‘Allister shook his white head. ‘My dear, I am only the cashier. It is that young dare-devil, Donald, who is delivering the goods—he and that queer smuggler friend of his.’

‘I wonder where they are now,’ said Flora. A far-away look came into her blue eyes.

‘If I were to guess, I should say at Mérida. In a day or two they ought to be home.’

‘Oh!’ cried the girl. ‘And you never told me!’

A trim maid crossed the lawn to them, bearing a card on a silver tray. ‘A gentleman wishes to speak to you, señor, on very urgent business.’

M'Allister passed the card to his granddaughter. 'Who is it, Flora? Your eyes are young.'

The Scottish girl took the card and read: 'Hernando Marinero, Casa del Palacio, Mérida.' She glanced at her grandfather, but the wrinkled old face told nothing.

'Bring him here at once, Anita,' he ordered.

A minute later the German stood bowing before them.

'You come from Mérida, señor? I—I do not think we have met before?'

The anxiety behind the controlled old voice was too obvious to escape the astute Teuton. He bowed again, and took the opportunity to steal an appraising glance at the girl. Her sudden pallor confirmed his theory. He gave himself the pleasure of playing a little further upon their emotions. 'From Mérida, señor. I found your business office closed, but the caretaker gave me your address, and I came immediately.'

'I understand your business is urgent, señor?'

'It is, alas! It is a business of life and death.'

Flora M'Allister sprang to her feet. 'Has anything happened to Señor Bruce?' she cried.

Franz von Festinghaus looked grave, but in his heart he triumphed. 'Señorita, I grieve to say that Señor Bruce's days are numbered.'

Alan M'Allister, too, was on his feet, clutching the back of his chair with his hands. 'What is this you tell us—Donald Bruce dying?'

'Alas, señor! To-day, perhaps, or it may be in two days, or even a week. But it appears that he has a report to make to you—a matter of such importance that, though he lies in my house, I could not persuade him to entrust me with it. If he could see you personally, it would, I think, relieve his mind.'

'And his companion—what of him?'

'His companion, unfortunately, is in prison. I do not profess to know the details of this matter, señor. I only know that Señor Bruce lies very near to death, and that I have taken him into my house.'

'But the trains!' cried the old merchant. '*Dios!* The trains of this country will take two days to get me to my friend. He may be dead by then.'

'Too true, señor. Yet, if you would condescend to make use of my automobile, which stands at your door, we should be there long

before the railway could take us. It is a good machine, well found. On the way I could tell you all I know of this sad affair.'

The old man looked with troubled eyes at his granddaughter. 'Flora, I must go at once,' he said in English.

'Take me with you!' she pleaded. 'Oh, grandad!' A deep blush coloured her face, and was followed by deadly paleness.

'Go and get ready, child,' he said with great tenderness.—'Señor Marinero, in five minutes we will accompany you. Forgive me if I seem discourteous. This is a great blow—a very heavy blow!'

'I believe you, señor.' The German bowed with horrible irony. 'I will go and see that all is ready for you and the señorita.'

VI.

The trim maid-servant had left Señor Marinero in a cool apartment, and had set before him a box of the best cigars and a bottle of wine—one of the choicest wines of M'Ilroy, M'Ilroy, & M'Allister. She was returning to her quarters, when the bell summoned her again to the door. Another car had drawn up, and in the porch two men were standing—two haggard, travel-stained men. Anita first looked at them askance, and then stood back

with an exclamation. One of the men she knew, but, *Dios*, how he was changed !

‘Señor Bruce !’ she almost gasped.

‘The master is at home ?’ demanded Bruce abruptly.

‘*Si, señor.* But he is going out. A gentleman has called for him. His car is waiting, as you see.’

‘What gentleman ? Tell me, Anita ; it is important.’

‘A Señor Marinero.’

‘Anita *mia*, I must see Señor M‘Allister at once. At once, you understand ! And Señor Marinero must not know that I see him. Take me to him !’

‘To hear is to obey,’ said Anita, with a curtsy in which was some mockery, for she was a favoured domestic, and not accustomed to this curt tone from one who was a frequent visitor to the house.

Before accompanying her Bruce spoke in a low voice to his companion. ‘Little Bird, go back to the gates, and if that villain Festinghaus leaves before me, watch which way he goes. I will follow in our taxi and pick you up.’

VII.

If Franz von Festinghaus had not allowed himself a few hours’ rest after his long journey,

before procuring the fine car which stood at the door, he would never have received the message which reached him as he was drinking his second glass of wine. He took it from Anita's silver tray, and tore it open with a queer misgiving. 'Señor M'Allister presents his compliments to Señor Marinero, and begs to state that important news just to hand removes the necessity for him to leave Barcelona at present. He hopes to have the pleasure of communicating with Señor Marinero at an early date.'

The German sprang to his feet. 'Is that all, girl?' he demanded angrily.

'*Si, señor.*'

Von Festinghaus stood staring a moment at the slip of paper, then strode from the room without a word. Anita followed him to the house door. 'Is there any message for my master, señor?'

'Only this,' said the German darkly; 'it is a proverb, my dear. "The fox may know much, but the hunter must know more."' He sprang to the driving-seat of his powerful car, and glided away.

With a face ominous as thunder, and at a pace that boded ill for anything which might meet him, he drove towards the road gate. The drive narrowed in the last straight stretch

before the gate, and as the German swept down this in full career a man stepped swiftly out from the shelter of some bushes—a gaunt old man with a grim, hawk-like face. The man's right arm jerked back over his shoulder, and Franz von Festinghaus caught the sudden gleam of a poised knife.

With wonderful quickness the German's right hand flew to his breast-pocket, his left hand still on the steering-wheel. Fifteen yards from the gate his revolver cracked out. It was all a matter of seconds; but so is life and death. His steering swerved ever so little from the straight as he aimed, and as the man with the knife sprang backwards, the great car crashed into the stone gate-post, and amid the shattered ruin Franz von Festinghaus lay still.

The Little Bird glanced swiftly up the drive, and saw that he was alone. The engine was still throbbing amid the wreck of stone and iron, and before returning his unthrown knife to its sheath, the Catalan drove its sharp point with all his force into the tire nearest to him. He was kneeling beside the dead man when the taxi in which he and Bruce had come to the house drew up, and the young Scot sprang out.

‘There has been an accident, señor,’ said

Pajarillo calmly. 'One should drive slowly on such a narrow road. A tire bursts, one swerves—*adios!*' He threw up his hands with an expressive gesture.

The chauffeur of the taxi bent over the dead man. 'The *caballero* has broken his neck,' he announced. '*Santísima Virgen!* It is enough to unnerve a man!'

'It is indeed,' said Bruce. 'You must go and report this matter to the authorities at once. On the way, stop and send a doctor. My friend and I will await your return.'

The man drove off, taking the corner by the broken gate with extreme caution.

'Stand in front of me a moment, Little Bird,' said Bruce. 'There may be papers in this rascal's pocket which may be more usefully examined at the Casa M'Allister than at the Capitanía General.' He ran quickly through the dead spy's pockets, tossed the revolver among the bushes, and straightening himself again, caught the Catalan regarding the German with a whimsical expression.

'What are you thinking of, Pablo *mio*?'

'I was thinking, señor,' said the smuggler philosopher, 'how blind is the chance which sways the balance of men's lives—how you and I, after a hundred adventures, stand safely here, looking down upon the place from which

we started, and upon this man, who, two days ago, held us as good as dead. He hated us very heartily; but he was a clever worker in his own cause. It is my belief he would have died more happily with my knife in his throat than by this blind cuff of fate. It would have been more satisfactory both for him and for me.'

'It would have been more difficult to explain at the Capitanía General,' said Bruce grimly. 'Pablo, I believe you are a pagan!'

The smuggler crossed himself piously. 'God forbid!' he exclaimed. 'All the same, accidents are tragic things, Señor Bruce.'

'You will take a better view of them, Pablo, when your wife and family welcome you home this evening.'

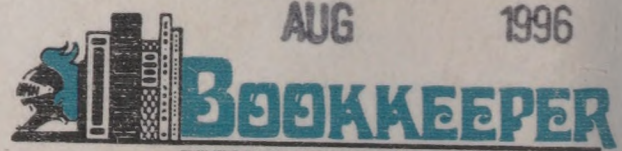
'*Hombre*, and that is true enough!' exclaimed the Catalan. 'To think that for the moment I was forgetting them—my wife and family, who have been awaiting me so long! Ah! here comes the doctor.'

THE END.

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process
Neutralizing Agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date:

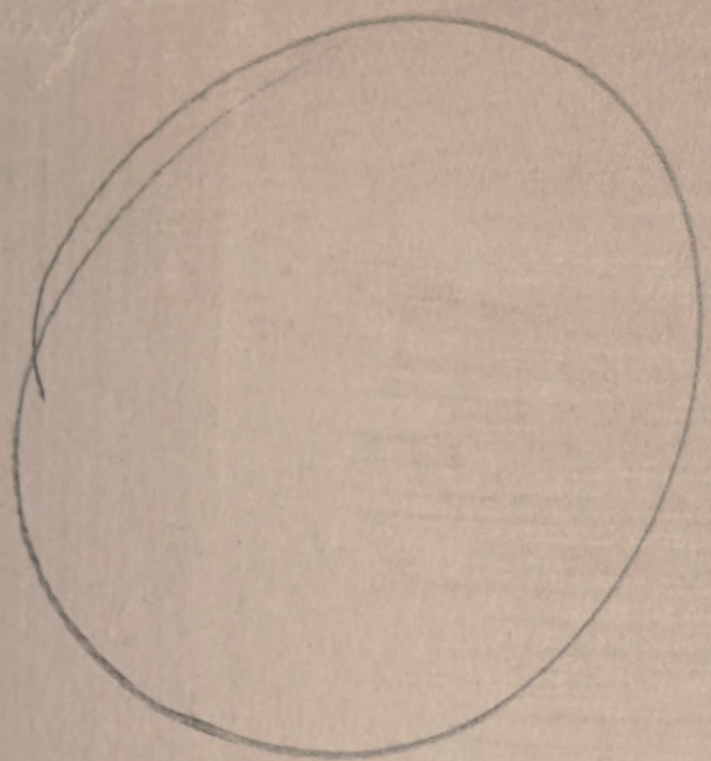
AUG

1996



PRESERVATION TECHNOLOGIES, INC.

111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Twp., PA 16066
(412) 779-2111



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00014694432